

Communications Workers of America, District One

CWA Bargains No-Layoff Deal with Corzine: Protects Collective Bargaining Agreement; Wage Increase Deferred Until 1/1/11; 10 Furlough Days Offset by Creation of 7-Day Paid Leave Bank

TRENTON, N.J.—The Communications Workers of America has reached an agreement with the Corzine Administration that contains an enforceable 18-month no-layoff guarantee and creates a 7-Day Paid Leave Bank to offset the 10 Furlough Days agreed to by the union from May 2009 through June 2010. The deal protects as many as 7,000 state worker jobs that were at risk because of the \$9 billion budget shortfall.

The deal provides that the wage increase scheduled to go into effect on July 1, 2009 will be postponed until January 1, 2011. Workers will continue to accrue pension benefits as if the raise had been paid. These provisions mean that by the end of the current collective bargaining agreement on June 30, 2011, all the provisions of the contract that took effect in July 2007 will be intact.

"Given the realities of the current economic crisis, and soaring levels of unemployment, our two top priorities in these negotiations were the protection of all of our members' jobs and preserving the integrity of the collective bargaining agreement," said Chris Shelton, Vice President, CWA District One. "We achieved those goals."

"We recognized the seriousness of the state's fiscal crisis and we said all along that we were willing to do our fair share, through the collective bargaining process," said Shelton. "State workers have stepped up, and done what is best for the state, and what was necessary to ensure that not a single member loses his or her job in the midst of the worst recession since the 1930s."

Other provisions of the Memorandum of Agreement between CWA and the State include:

If the state seeks to lay off any workers prior to January 1, 2011, the deferral of the July 2009 raise will be rescinded and wages will be returned to the levels provided for in the 2007-2011 contract.

All workers will receive a Paid Leave Bank (PLB) of 7 days which, if not used before separation from state service, can be cashed out when a worker leaves or retires from State service. The days in the PLB will be accrued as follows: one day accrued June 30, 2009, one day accrued June 30, 2010, and one day accrued for every 2 furlough days taken, totaling 7 days altogether.

Of the 9 furlough days scheduled for Fiscal Year 2010, one will be the day after Thanksgiving in 2009 and one will be on Lincoln's Birthday in 2010. Beginning in November, 2010, the day after Thanksgiving will be a paid holiday and Lincoln's Birthday will be treated as a regular work day.

As part of the agreement's no layoff agreement, the State has agreed to rescind its plan to close Regional Day Schools operated by the Department of Children and Families. A commission including CWA representation will study the future of the schools.

The state and the union have agreed to request jointly that the Civil Service Commission rescind the recently adopted rule permitting the implementation of "staggered furloughs" without collective bargaining. A 16-member Study Commission on Alternatives to Permanent Layoffs will be established to address these issues.

The agreement also provides for reduction in Temporary Employment Service (TES) positions, contract temps, and outside contractors who perform DOT engineering work.

The proposed Memorandum of Agreement must be ratified by State Worker members of CWA, and the ratification process will be overseen by the American Arbitration Association.