

CWA STATE WORKER BARGAINING REPORT

October 2011

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We are Fighting Back!

The Christie/Sweeney/Oliver deal eliminating Collective Bargaining for Healthcare hurt us, but we are not defeated. We are fighting back – at the Bargaining Table, at the Polls this November, and at the worksite.

What follows is a Bargaining Report of where we are and where we are headed:

Language and Takeback Demands:

The Christie Administration has made many takeback demands – some of which will go away but some of which continue to pose a significant problem. Problematic demands include but are not limited to Clothing Allowance, Shift Differential, Increments and Job Security:

Clothing Allowance – The State Auditor – Matthew Boxer – issued a report criticizing clothing allowances for workers who do not wear uniforms. At the same time, the Christie Administration demanded an end to Clothing Allowance at the table. We are struggling with the Administration over criteria for Clothing Allowance and this is going to be a difficult issue to resolve.

Shift Differential – We have a shift differential of 25 cents an hour – a very small differential. There is still a demand on the table to do away with that. CWA has rejected that demand.

Increments – The Administration has demanded some freeze of increments. We have rejected that demand.

Job Security – The Administration demanded eliminating Side Letters 13 and 35. We have rejected that demand and we are working on a counter proposal that addresses privatization concerns, layoff avoidance, and hiring back laid off workers.

There are other language issues that we are struggling with including PAR/PES, Union Leaves, Discipline, Grievance – but we hope that these issues will not hold up an Agreement. Nevertheless, you should know that we have not signed off on any of those issues.

Healthcare:

Healthcare is no longer collectively bargained under Sweeney Legislation. Design of the Healthcare plans is now handled by the Joint State Health Benefits Plan Design Committee. A report on what is happening with that committee can be on our website : www.cwalocal1032.org

Wages:

We are paying 1% more for pension now (and will pay another 1% over 7 years).

Depending upon how much you earn and what coverage you have, worker healthcare contributions could triple by the end of a four year agreement. You can look up what your costs would be on the CWA website – www.cwanj.org.

We know that this is not going to be a rich Contract – but we still need a Contract that includes a net increase.

The Administration offer does not, at this time, cover the out of pocket increased costs our members will be paying.

Neither side has reached a bottom-line on economics.

We are still bargaining.

Analysis:

Negotiating this Contract continues to be a very challenging task. We know that our members are worried about the increases in pension and healthcare costs as well as job security. We do not know if we will be able to reach an Agreement with this Administration any time soon. There are many difficult outstanding issues. We are, however, still negotiating although we are making only limited progress.

Of even greater concern is the fact that Governor Christie is flirting with running for President. We must fight back and make sure that our rights and our Contract are not sacrificed to a crass political campaign.

We engaged a great deal of mobilization in the spring trying to stop the PenBen bill. We are developing plans to help to drive the Contract negotiations forward in the event that we do not make greater progress in the next few weeks. Locals will roll these plans out through shop stewards and activists. For obvious reasons, we are not including them here.

You can receive regular updates from the bargaining committee by going to www.cwanj.org and signing up and by checking your own Local websites.

In Solidarity,

John Rose, President CWA Local 1031
Patrick Kavanagh, President CWA Local 1032
Adam Liebtag, President CWA Local 1036
Ken McNamara, President CWA Local 1037
Paul Alexander, President CWA Local 1038
Tom Palermo, President CWA Local 1039
Carolyn C. Wade, President CWA Local 1040
Chris Shelton, Vice President CWA District 1
Hetty Rosenstein, NJ Director CWA District 1
Steve Weissman, NJ General Counsel, District 1