

## Riverside County Bargaining Update (May 3, 2017)

Earlier this week your Bargaining Team met with the County.

There had been some subtle signals that perhaps the County might be interested in engaging in real bargaining to try to reach an agreement. We went into this week's meeting cautiously hopeful that that might be true. We floated a couple of concepts that we thought could address some of the County's concerns, while also being of benefit to us. (We will be discussing the particulars of those concepts at our Quarterly Membership meeting in Riverside on May 23rd). The County team had no authority to do anything but to take the concepts back to the Board of Supervisors (BoS) to see if there was openness to engage in true negotiations. The County team's plan was to take it to the Board in their closed session yesterday. The Board did not take up the subject of the LIUNA negotiations as planned, but we expect that they will next Tuesday.

As I said, there had been some subtle signals that perhaps the BoS were interested in adopting a more fair and reasonable approach to our contract. Since that time there have been some not so subtle signals that perhaps that is not true, and that they may be doubling down on their "shove it down their throats" approach to negotiations.

No honest person can argue that we haven't already been bled by a Board that can't seem to find solutions to problems created by their own decisions. In 2010 we were forced to take a furlough equal to a 10% pay cut, as did the other Unions. We had our wages frozen for two years. SEIU had their wages frozen for 3 1/2 years. And, both Unions suffered layoffs in painfully significant numbers. In our following contract, even though we came out ahead in the end, we gave them a huge amount of relief on the front end of that contract. The SEIU contract also gave them a lot of relief. My point in all of this is that Riverside County employees have already given beyond a point that could be considered reasonable, yet the BoS have NOTHING to show for it. And now they want MORE. They want to permanently eliminate the two step merit increase and replace it with a one step increase. They want to alter the flex healthcare benefit in a way that would cause financial harm to more than 5,000 of our members. Our position can be summed up in one word, "ENOUGH!" If they have not been able to manage the County out of its fiscal woes given our sacrifices, we would be fools to think that they will do any better if we sacrifice more. Their decision to blow many millions of dollars on consultants to find efficiencies is an indication of how ill equipped the County is to manage its own affairs. And, the consultants, like the County, seem to have two tools in their tool box- a hammer and a saw. It is unlikely that the County will achieve any better results no matter how much we sacrifice. It is clear that it is now time for us solidify our plans for dealing with impasse and what will likely be the Board's attempt to impose their terms and conditions upon us. As many of you know, SEIU is in the process of conducting a strike authorization vote. Many of our members have asked whether we will be conducting such a vote. We will be taking a somewhat different approach, some of which will be

discussed publicly at our meetings, and some of which won't. Any actual strike actions will be done in a very precise and surgical fashion. Those plans will not be discussed publicly. If you are not contacted by Union staff regarding possible participation in a strike, your worksite is not one where we are considering that kind of an action. We will also likely be engaged in lunch time pickets, rallies, and other types of actions. Those sorts of actions will be discussed and planned publicly. In short, we will not attempt a prolonged across the board strike, but, if it comes to that, we will be targeting specific areas. There will be opportunities for everyone to participate in actions that don't rise to the level of an actual strike. Again, if we do not contact you, we are not planning a strike at your worksite. We have hired an internal organizer to coordinate these plans, and she is already working with our members in preparation for what may be coming. It is my sincere hope that we are able to reach a deal, but we will not agree to anything along the lines of the County's current proposals just to avoid impasse. We should have a much clearer idea of what will happen after the BoS meets in closed session next Tuesday. As soon as we know anything, we will update. I know this has been a long and frustrating experience, but I ask for your patience. There is no benefit to us to rush the process. I'm confident that we all have the stomach to carry us through to our goal of a fair contract.

I hope to see you at our next Union meeting. I and the other staff are also scheduling site visits to discuss these issues, so we will see you at those meetings as well

In Solidarity,  
Stephen Switzer, Business Manager