

Riverside County Bargaining Update (November 7, 2016)

A Time For Anger

Once again, this post will not be brief, so I ask for your indulgence.

Yesterday the County presented the first half of their comprehensive proposal. As expected their proposal was essentially a laundry list of takeaways. And that was just the first half of their proposal. We know there will be even more proposed concessions when they present the rest of the proposal on the 9th of November.

There were quite a few small nickel and dime concessions that they wanted. I won't go into all of those here, but none of them were things the Union finds agreeable.

The main concession that was proposed yesterday was the elimination of the two-step merit increase. Currently, when an employee has a successful performance review, the employee receives a two step increase in their salary. This represents an increase of 5.5%. The County is proposing that the merit increase be reduced to one step, or 2.71%.

This is not a typical "takeaway." This is a radical and unprecedented assault on your livelihoods.

I believe that the County is deeply committed to obtaining this particular concession. I believe they intend to drive the negotiations to impasse so that they can impose this as part of the terms and conditions of your employment. As I have already said, and as I reiterated in negotiations yesterday, this Union will not agree to anything this extreme. That, however, will likely not be enough.

Now, I have been contacted by a number of our members who want to know if we can go on strike. The answer is, "Not yet." If in fact we do end up at impasse, and the County imposes these cuts on us, then we can engage in strikes and similar job actions. It is my most sincere wish that this does not become necessary. We would, however, be foolish not to be planning for those types of scenarios.

The only sane reaction when someone is attempting to harm your family is to fight like hell to stop them. The time is likely coming when all LIUNA members will have to ask themselves how hard they are willing to fight for basic fairness. How hard are we willing to fight to stop the County from molesting our children's futures? How hard are we willing to fight to maintain jobs that allow us to pay our bills and provide for our families? How hard are we willing to fight to have the value of the work we do and the service we provide reflected in our paychecks? As you know, we have already made huge concessions in recent years, and the County has managed to accomplish nothing with these savings. Many of us are only now starting to feel somewhat stable as we have begun to recover some of what we lost. Now the County expects more. We must tell them that enough is enough.

This fight is going to require more from us than we have ever had to muster

in the past. The County believes that you are merely docile public servants and that, while you might complain, at the end of the day you will eat any slop that they throw at your feet. Unless we are willing to go all the way in our resistance to the County, they will be proven right. And they will have their way with us in contract negotiations for years to come. They know that if we let them get away with this, then we'll let them get away with anything.

As I said, it is truly my sincerest hope that this type of action on our part will not be necessary, but we need to prepare now for every possibility.

At our Union meetings we discuss these matters in much more candid detail. I strongly recommend that, if you don't already, you begin to attend these meetings, at least while we're in negotiations. Your input on our courses of action is crucial to our success.

This is not an easy time, and ours is not an easy task. But I don't believe that you are the weak willed sheep the County believes you to be. And I am confident that I will be proven right.

Our next bargaining session is scheduled for November 9th, after which I will make another report.