



## FOUR BARGAINING UNITS AGREE TO MAJOR CONTRACT REFORMS

Schwarzenegger Administration Demands Concessions with New Agreement

For Immediate Release: June 16, 2010

**Sacramento:** Four bargaining groups representing California state employees have agreed to concessions demanded by the Schwarzenegger Administration.

The four groups involved are CDF Firefighters Local 2881; the California Association of Highway Patrolmen (CAHP); the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Bargaining Unit (BU) 19 representing the health and social services professionals; and the California Association of Psychiatric Technicians (CAPT), who represent over 7,000 state-licensed Psychiatric Technicians who work in California's programs serving people with mental illnesses and developmental disabilities.

The four bargaining groups agreed to work with Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger toward agreements that include both pension reform and benefit reductions.

For the first time in their history, the CDF Firefighters union, 6,500 members who make up the frontline of CAL FIRE, agreed to a new contract that includes provisions which they characterize as a step backwards for employees.

There is, however, language in the agreement which the bargaining units do like. It calls for a continuous appropriation that allows employees to be paid even if there is not a state budget in place.

"It is certainly not a great day when the issue we are bragging about is that our members will avoid being paid minimum wage if the state budget is not implemented in a timely manner," said CDF Firefighters President, Bob Wolf. "We are pleased to put this behind us as we begin fire season."

The reforms in the contracts take into consideration the extraordinarily difficult economic environment in which we work.

#More#

The pension reforms include:

- Increasing the age of retirement for new hires. For example, the safety groups' retirement goes from 3% at the age of 50 to 3% at age 55.
- Altering the definition of final compensation for new hires by replacing the single highest year's average with the three highest years' average for determining final compensation.
- Increasing employee contributions to PERS for retirement to at least 10% of pay for all four groups.
- Rollover extension of existing contract provisions for three years for public safety and two years for miscellaneous groups.

"This is a situation where bargaining units recognize that the entire state budget could be held in a stalemate if reform is not implemented," said Ken Murch of the California Association of Psychiatric Technicians (CAPT).

It is a difficult time for labor, and the bargaining units obviously gave much more than they got.

"We are not blind or deaf to the unique times in California. We want to get the necessary discussion of pension reform behind us," said Jon Hamm of the California Association of Highway Patrolmen (CAHP).

There is an array of difficult issues confronting the state of California. This willingness to be a part of working with the Governor and the Legislature to accept a difficult contract is the first step toward California concentrating on other problems.

"The best that can be said about these agreements is that we have removed the unknown," said Pam Manwiller with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME BU 19).

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