



MEDIA ADVISORY

CONTACT: Eric Bailey, ebailey@seiu73.org

Cook County Strike Continues as County Negotiators Attempt to Nickel and Dime the Workers

Chicago, IL – Last night, SEIU Local 73 met with County negotiators who offered a contract that amounted to only a 1/2% increase in pay over their last proposal - most workers won't receive any additional increase and others will get 10 cents an hour.

“We were prepared to settle the contract last night. When we costed out County negotiators’ offer it came to ten cents more on your hourly pay. We said that ain’t right!” said Dian Palmer, President of Local 73. “Within five minute we had 95 bargaining team members on the phone. And every one of them said we’ve come to far to accept only a dime when they’re offering the other unions so much more!”

“When we first entered negotiations with Cook County they offered us one penny an hour. Then they said they would sweeten the deal. And they offered us five cents an hour. Last night, they made the deal so sweet. They said they were going to give us a dime. That means if I want to get an extra dollar I have to work more than ten hours!” said Sylvia Kizer, Environmental Service Worker of 29 years for Cook County. “Toni Preckwinkle, if you don’t settle this contract, you are committing political suicide!”

“We’ve had a pandemic going on longer than COVID known as gun violence,” said Alexadrea Thanos, ER tech at Stroger Hospital for eight years. “We’re worried because we know a lot of trauma patients from gun violence and fireworks will be brought to our world class level one trauma center. The fact is we elected the political leaders in this community not to defer, deflect, and delay decisions that benefit working people. The people who were on the frontlines and always have been. And what does County have to offer us? An extra dime an hour? We all know our value is worth more than a dime. We all want to be there for our patients and could be. I’m asking you, President Preckwinkle, to help us, the citizens, the taxpayers, and the voters of Cook County. Help us settle this contract now and settle it fairly. You, madam president, possess this power. Lives are depending on you!”

“We went to the meeting with County negotiators and the Federal mediator last night with the intent to settle the contract,” said Larry Alcott, Lead Negotiator for SEIU. “They came to the with the intent to end the strike. They had no interest in settling the contract. They only cared about getting you back to work because they can’t run this hospital and this county without you!”

“Our bargaining teams testified that we will continue to strike. One day longer, one day stronger. We will move to bigger and bolder actions so that Toni Preckwinkle can run but she can’t hide from justice and from workers who are willing to stand up for their rights, and the rights of their patients, and their communities,” said Alcott.

“The County is making the claim that we’re getting more money than the other unions! Well last night they tried to use statistics to support their lies. They’re using funny math, by adding bonuses to the deal and claim your getting the same as everyone else, in fact you’re getting more. The reality is if we’re making \$50,000 that \$1,000 bonus is 2% but someone making \$100,000 gets the same thousand, for them, it’s 1%. So, it looks like we’re getting more, but we’re not getting more, we’re just poorer. That’s a way to play with numbers to support the County negotiators’ numbers,” said Alcott.

“The other unions got improvements on their anniversary steps of about 4% more than they’re giving us. And they’re telling the press and politicians, we didn’t count that when we totaled the numbers because it wasn’t relevant. Well, if it isn’t relevant that give it to us too!” said Alcott.

Cook County workers will remain on strike until Toni Preckwinkle and her negotiating team are prepared to provide the workers the same contract they gave the other unions.

The County has yet to schedule formal bargaining for today with our union and the Federal mediator.

#

SEIU Local 73 represents more than 29,000 workers, primarily in public service and publicly funded positions in school districts, municipalities, social service agencies, and many other job classifications in Illinois and Indiana. We are dedicated to improving the lives of workers and their families.