



300 S. Ashland Ave. Suite 400, Chicago, IL 60607
312.787.5868 888.734.8573 Fax: 312.337.7768
www.SEIU73.org

March 20, 2024

The Honorable J.B. Pritzker
Governor of Illinois
207 State House
Springfield, IL 62706

Re: Illinois State Toll Highway Authority

Dear Governor Pritzker,

SEIU Local 73 and the Tollway have been bargaining in good faith to reach an agreement on a successor contract since the expiration of the current contract on July 1, 2023.

We have made decent progress, with almost all of the non-economic issues reaching a tentative agreement. At the last session, we made our full economic proposal, and on Monday, March 18, 2024, the Tollway was to give its counter-proposal. Instead, they informed us that they will no longer negotiate a successor agreement for the 147 Toll Collectors, Money Room Employees, and Money Truck Drivers. Instead, they have decided to lay them off. They informed us that their jobs were temporary and that call volume and wait times in the Call Center were down.

Approximately 199 employees were removed from the cash collections when COVID-19 struck. The Tollway created a new opportunity for this staff and retrained these employees to perform work at the Tollway Call Center. Through two early separation incentives and attrition, the number has decreased to 147 (63 have over 15 years of service).

Under your Leadership, the Tollway Board and Administration decided to take long-term, dedicated state employees whose jobs would be eliminated due to new technology (electronic tolling) and invest in retraining the employees in a new career path. Both the Union and Management were able to make compromises to make this a win/win situation. While most states just laid their workers off, Illinois Tollway created a growth plan that provided our members with the training needed to continue to value state employees who provide vital customer service to the citizens of Illinois.

Dian Palmer
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Joseph Richert
Secretary-Treasurer

Jeffrey Howard
Executive Vice President

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Lavitta "Vee" Steward
Vice President

Tollway negotiators informed us that Lighthouse for the Blind is a State-Authorized subcontractor, and they will continue to do the work. We have been told previously that Lighthouse will replace any of our workers who leave.

Privatizing this work would be the wrong ending to a great story of how cooperation between the Tollway and its unionized employees came together, and the State and Illinois Tollway invested time and resources to reeducate the employees, giving them viable new opportunities. Good-paying public sector jobs should not be eliminated as long as they provide quality services to the citizens of Illinois.

For these reasons, we ask you to assist in any way you can to avert the layoff of these valuable state employees.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Joseph Richert". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small flourish at the end.

Joseph Richert
Secretary-Treasurer

Service Employees International Union Local 73
300 S. Ashland #400
Chicago, IL 60607
773-805-0399 (cell)
jrichert@seiu73.org