

THE COUNTY AND UNION DISAGREE ON STRIKES ESTIMATES



Officials for the Riverside County and representative of the public-sector union have both released estimates on the amount of employees who participated in a strike, which lasted for an entire day, and caused some disruptions to the services offered within the county. However, while both released estimates, the results were conflicting, as the estimates were not the same. The Human Resources chief of Riverside County, Barbara Oliver, said that less than 1,400 employees were marked absent from their place of employment on the Tuesday that the strike took place, due to participating in the strike. However, conflicting results have come from the Services Employees International Union Local 721, as they are saying that the number of employees out of work on that Tuesday due to the strike was much closer to 2,000. There are nearly 6,000 county employees who are also members of the Local 721 Union. The union had made the indication that all of the members would be actively participating with the strike. However, it turns out that the entire membership did not participate and the predictions were much higher than the actual outcome. The members of the union are a large mix of different employees, varying from social workers, accountants, engineers, and many others. Oliver commented to the City News Services that the strike did cause some delays in customer service, typically at the social services department. A superior court judge issued out an injunction which prevented at least 250 registered nurses, along with other employees of the health care profession, from missing work and participating in the strike. This could be a reason that less union members than predicted showed up for the strike. The county made arguments that if these employees were absent from their jobs; it could cause a huge concern for the safety of the general public. Immediately after the Board of Supervisors' meeting started, a large number of the union members entered the front lobby with signs in hand. The Chairman, John Tavaglione, was forced to suspend the proceedings for the time being because of all the commotion. In the meantime, nearly 1,000 of the union members began chanting, with all of their picket signs in hand. Some of the signs said, "Respect and Dignity" and "Fight for Justice." The union members of SEIU Local 721 agreed in November that they would protest the board's decision as a means of finding a way to negotiate, even if it meant a strike would take place. In the meantime, the county claims to be dealing with an \$80 million budget deficit and those nearly 600 jobs could be cut within the next year as a means of getting the budget back on track. With changes in place, the county would be able to save millions of dollars.

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