

## HIALEAH MAYOR ASKS FIRE UNION TO GIVE UP HOLIDAY PAY



In order to keep people in their jobs a lot of concessions are being made. Workers are being asked to reduce the funding available for their benefits. They are being asked to reject the notion of overtime and keep to strict time cards. Some of them are even being asked to give up their holiday pay. That is the case in the city of Hialeah, Florida. The mayor of that city is asking the fire fighters of the city to give up their holiday pay in order to balance their budget. The mayor, Carlos Hernandez, and the union for the fire fighters have had some disputes about what exactly is the best way to make budget cuts. Several different methods of saving money have been discussed. One option for saving money included the idea of removing supplies from the fire trucks. This agreement was struck down. The newest plan asks the fire fighters to give up some of their holiday pay in exchange for keeping another round of layoffs at bay. Last Wednesday, Mayor Carlos Hernandez repeated his calls for union negotiations to resume in order to avoid more layoffs in the department. He has a new money saving plan, but he was not forthcoming on all of the details, and that may be one of the reasons that the union has not been ready to discuss the new terms. "Here I am. Please come to the table," Hernandez said to Florida reporters in a statement. The message was aimed at the union leader. The question is, what is the benefit to the fire fighter union if they consider the proposal at all? Well, according to the mayor the city would be able to save millions of dollars if the fire fighters would be willing to give up their double-and-a-half-time holiday pay. The amount would allow the city to do something beneficial for everyone; they would be able to hire more fire fighters to service the town. It is estimated that the savings from the overtime would allow the city to have enough funding to rehire 14 fire fighters that has been previously laid off. They would also have enough money to hire nine of the fire fighter trainees who were laid off when the city's new fiscal year began on October 1st. Of course, there is also one other thing to be considered. It is not a benefit, but a pitfall to be avoided. Under the currently approved city budget if the union does not agree to at least some of the concessions, there could be large-scale reductions to the fire fighting force. Some estimates show that at least 40% of the fire fighters could be laid off to balance the budget if no agreement can be reached. The city currently has a deficit of a \$13.7 million to close up this fiscal year. Currently, the union leaders have been resisting the city's attempts to make up the budget shortfall by cutting down the firefighters benefits until after the city approves a forensic audit of its financials. They hope to help the fire fighters keep their benefits by finding better places to cut the benefits from.