

NEW YORK AND UNION REACH AGREEMENT



For those of you who have not been following the drama of the New York state union vote and layoffs here is the short version of the situation, excerpted from a previous article published here on Layoff Watch: "...that state of New York employees are facing at the current moment here is a short summary of the events. It all began in late September when the union members failed to ratify the governors proposed contract, primarily because it allowed the state to dip into their health care fund for monies. When the union did not approve it, the governor began the process of what can only be termed as massive layoffs. After several re-negotiations and the actual issuance of pink slips, the governor and the union leadership were able to come to a tentative agreement. In order to give the union members enough time to vote on the new contract a stay of layoffs were give. That stay lasted until November 4th. It is now up to the union members to vote and decide if their colleagues stay on, or if they go so that the remaining workers can keep their current terms." (from <http://www.layoffwatch.com/2011/10/pef-urges-union-members-to-vote-yes/>) As the 4th came and went the vote, much to the surprise of many in the state, and the members of the union actually approved the contract. So, what are the terms that the workers have agreed to under the new contracts? Well some of the terms in the new contract that the members of the Public Employees Federation were willing to vote yes on for the four-year term include: - A three-year freeze in all of their wages. - A raise of only 2% in the final year of the contract. - Paying a higher percentage of the costs for their health insurance premiums. - Waiting on payment for the nine furlough days mandated by the contract until the end of the contract term. - Losing \$1000 in bonus to be paid to members. The memberships voting yes prevented the layoffs of the 3,496 union members who would have lost their job on Friday. These cuts would have been the single largest wave of job cuts to hit the state of New York in the past two decades. The voting, which took place via the US mail service in the two weeks prior to the date of the layoffs, showed that the voting members had a 70 percent support rating, with only 30 percent of the members voting against the proposal. Mr. Cuomo, the Governor of the state of New York had this to say about the change of the voting union members minds, at the news conference he held after the vote results were announced, "Cooler heads prevailed. It's a lesson in these times. These are times of hyperbole and rhetoric and emotion and fear and frustration. And if you're not careful, the frustration and the fear and the anxiety can win the day." The budget cuts result in a savings of \$450 million for the state of New York. When you consider the union members voted no by 54% the change is massive.

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