

MILWAUKEE COUNTY WORKERS FIGHT LAYOFFS



For most of us when a layoff comes there is little that can be done about it. You simply have to take the hit, learn to stretch your savings and move onto the job application lines in hopes of finding something suitable that will allow you to pay your bills and stay in your home. Well, apparently 40 members of the Milwaukee County sheriff's office that is not the case. They are not taking this job loss lying down. They took their future, and their jobs, into their own hands and went to court in order to save their jobs and get themselves back on the payroll. 40 deputies were able to get an 11th hour stay of layoff when their union was granted a temporary injunction of the layoffs, which were slated to happen on the 31st of December. So while their jobs may be safe, for the time being the temporary nature of the injunction means that they could find themselves in a similar spot in the near future. At the very least these law enforcement professionals will have their jobs for another month. The injunction was granted to the union by Milwaukee County Circuit Judge William Pocan. After the end of the month there will be some hearings held by the Wisconsin Employment Relations Commission and the county Civil Service Commission to decide on the legitimacy of the layoffs in relation to the union contract. When the Milwaukee County budget was released for the year it became obvious that the sheriff's office would not be able to keep on all of their staff. It was estimated that the office would need to cut a maximum of 61 of its workers to stay solvent in the 2012 fiscal year. A number of these layoffs were not needed, as 19 of the officers have decided to retire this year, and there is the possibility that two more officers may also take that option. This brought the total number of layoffs needed to about 40. The Milwaukee County Deputy Sheriffs' Association filed suit over the layoffs. They do not object to the reasoning behind the layoffs, or the fact that officers have to be cut from the budget. Their objection is in how the selection has been made. They argue that the staffing cuts ignore certain rules that the county and the union have agreed upon, such as the seniority clause. They believe that two officers should be on the list who are not, which would displace two members of the list. A representative for the union said the following to a reporter for jsonline.com, "have been improperly left off the 2011 layoff list due to ineffective promotions." The city concedes that the two officers were promoted before they had taken the required civil service exam, but that the union had the duty to raise objections about the promotions within 90 days of the actual changes, not later on when layoffs were imminent. The judge clearly did not see it in such clear-cut terms, or he would not have issued the injunction.

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