

SANGAMON COUNTY TO CUT PROBATION JOBS



Layoffs may be coming to the worker in the Adult Probations Department in Sangamon County in the very near future. On the bright side these cuts can be avoided. On the down side it comes at it a price. If the workers are willing to renegotiate their contract, and take a smaller raise than they were promised than the layoffs could be at least held off. Of course, there is some controversy over that particular plan of action, as you might expect when workers are given up funding without their employer making an equally large concession. The officials in the county are saying that the workers making concessions is the only way to keep the jobs and balance the budget, but the workers are saying that the proposed cuts are unfair to the workers. They are also saying that the cuts could result in cut backs to some of the county's services. If the pay cut option is not taken some of the cut will include laying off of two of the union workers in the adult probation. There are also talks of cutting down on three open positions in the juvenile detention center. As for non-union workers there are talks of laying off another non-union juvenile detention center worker. The cuts were protested on Tuesday, and the signs carried by the members of the Jeff Bigelow, regional director for the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Council 31 read things like, "Cut the fat, not the meat" and, "One manager for three employees." Sangamon County Board Chairman Andy Van Meter summed up the situation for a reporter for sj-r.com in the following comment, "We have to live within our budget. What's happening is we're getting less revenue. For three years in a row, the state of Illinois has cut our funding for adult probation and asked us to make up the difference. We can't." The workers however are skeptical that the cuts would cut back on layoffs. Or, as Michael Hovey, the president of AFSCME Local 1936, told a reporter for the same publication, "There would be no purpose in accepting it if they are still going to be layoffs," union workers are worried about taking a pay cut and still finding themselves in a position where they lose jobs, to the advantage of no one but the county administrators and their budget. Jeff Bigelow, the regional director for the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Council 31, went on to imply that it is management who should be cut. His exact words to the same reporter were, "There is one manager for every three people. Obviously, that's top heavy." One the whole there are 53 union workers at currently at the adult probation and juvenile detention departments at the county. So while the layoffs are not large in scale, they will still represent a significant cut in the workforce. There is no exact date for the layoffs, and no pink slips have been issued at the present moment, though they could happen as early as February 10th.

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