

Questions and Answers About the LA City Engineers & Professionals Contract Proposal

What are the effective dates of the proposal?

The proposal would be effective immediately. Technically it would be a four-year contract, beginning on July 1, 2011. It would expire on June 30, 2014. The offer includes a wage re-opener on January 1, 2013.

I didn't receive a ballot. What should I do?

Ballots were mailed out on June 9, 2011. All members of MOUs 8 and 17 are eligible to vote. If you did not receive your ballot, please contact Claudia Portillo at 213.368.8670.

How do I know if I'm a member?

If your pay stub reads "agency fee," you are not a member. If your pay stub reads "SEIU 721," you are a voting member. Only voting members can vote.

When will the furloughs end?

As a sign of good faith, the City has ended furloughs effective June 6, 2011. Should the proposal not be ratified, members will be required to make up missed furlough days.

Didn't EAA challenge the legality of furloughs?

Yes. And in March, 2011, a California Court of Appeals rejected EAA's challenge, saying that the City charter gives the Mayor and City Council the power to decide whether furloughs are necessary.

My department hasn't faced furloughs. Why should I support this agreement?

If this agreement is not ratified, the City says it will increase the number of furlough days and expand the number of departments subject to furloughs. Some special-funded departments may be subject to furloughs.

Is it true we're getting a week off at Christmas?

Yes. Under this proposal, in 2011 and 2012, you will trade 1.5% of your salary for four additional days off between Christmas and New Years. (That makes 10 days total in 2011-2012, including weekends.) The 1.5% will be deducted from your paychecks throughout the year to minimize the impact during the holidays.

What about emergency personnel and people like criminalists, whose departments can't shut down for the holidays?

These departments will develop their own plans for the time off at another time of the year. While the entire unit may not get the same days off, each member of the unit will receive four days off next to a paid holiday, when possible (for example, the week of Memorial Day).

Will there be more layoffs?

The proposal provides the City with substantial cost savings, which it agrees to use to mitigate layoffs.

Will we receive cost of living adjustments (COLAs) and step raises?

Under the proposal, you will receive a 2% COLA adjustment on July 1, 2011 and a 3% COLA adjustment on June 30, 2013. Step raises will be halted, but *only* for FY 2011-2012 and FY 2012-2013.

We're being asked to contribute 4% more of our salaries toward retirement. What are we getting in return?

This agreement locks in two-party retirement health care. That means the City cannot unilaterally take away or reduce health coverage for us or our spouses once we retire. The City must cover health care costs as they rise.

Didn't we already agree to pay more toward our retirement plans?

Previous agreements call for all LACERS members to pay 1% more toward retirement, starting on July 1, 2011. This previous ERIP commitment will not be affected by the new agreement.

What happens if I leave the City before I retire?

If you retire after less than five years of service, you can cash out your retirement contributions with interest. After five years of service, your pension vests, and you can draw it once you turn 60. For this reason, it's important to understand that you are not agreeing to give an additional 4% of your salary to the City. You are investing that money in your pension, which no one can take away from you. For more information, please visit <http://www.lacers.org/>.

Will our dues go up with this contract vote?

No, your dues rate of .54% will remain the same.

What happens if we don't ratify this agreement?

If we reject the proposal, we will return to a state of impasse. Please understand that our negotiation and mediation options have now been exhausted.

So what happens? The City will undoubtedly choose to "unilaterally implement" portions of the proposal. "Unilateral implementation" is a management tactic under which the City can, for a period of one year, cherry-pick those items from its proposals that it wishes to unilaterally implement. Obviously, the City would choose only to implement those items that it likes. It may be possible to delay implementation by requesting that the City's Employee Relations Board appoint a fact-finder. The fact-finder would conduct a hearing to obtain both parties' positions on the disputed issues and write a non-binding report. Once the report is issued, the City could take the option to re-open negotiations or move ahead with implementation. Of course, the bargaining unit members would have the right to strike (except for certain safety-sensitive positions).

Why the rush? Why do we only have a week to vote?

The City must finalize its budget by July 1. Ballots are due by June 17 in order to give the City time to adjust its budget predictions for the coming fiscal year.

Where can I get more information?

Bargaining team members and union staff will be on-hand at worksite meetings to answer your questions and provide any additional information you require. A schedule of worksite meetings can be found online at www.seiu721.org/cities.

You can also contact Paul Kim, your worksite organizer. He can be reached by phone at 213.738.8427 or by email at paul.kim@seiu721.org.

More resources are also available at www.seiu721.org/cities.