

POST GUILD UNIT

FORUM...



The Washington-Baltimore Newspaper Guild, Local 32035, TNG-CWA

November 8, 2005

Guild and Post Reach Three-Year Contract

The Newspaper Guild and Washington Post management reached a comprehensive tentative agreement late Monday on a new three-year contract covering about 1,350 news and commercial employees.

The deal would give most Post workers covered by the Guild an immediate payment of **\$2,000**, followed by **four raises** starting nine months after the date of signing. Two raises would range from \$8.50 to \$12 a week, depending on income, and two would be for \$10.50 a week across the board. (Part-timers working less than 30 hours a week would get an immediate payment of **\$1,325** and four raises averaging 28 cents an hour.)

The agreement, which met a deadline both sides had said was a goal, followed months of bargaining and an intensive session on Monday that stretched across 14 hours and ended five minutes before midnight.

It is the **first agreement in recent memory** to be reached before the expiration of a current Guild-Post contract -- meaning that employees will not have to wait months -- or years, as has sometimes been the case -- to get their raises and other economic benefits.

"Guild members in all departments of The Post showed their strength during the previous contract talks, and that momentum helped us achieve a solid contract this year with important protections," said Rick Ehrmann chief negotiator for the Guild.

In addition to the salary increases – hard fought, given recent circulation losses at The Post and the steady stream of dismal news coming from the newspaper industry over all – the new contract will:

- Improve the pension plan, with added benefits for both early (pre-65 years old) and older retirees.
- Provide more part-timers with immediate health coverage
- Allow the use of sick leave to care for an ailing parent, spouse, or domestic partner
- Give an additional raise to mailroom workers in recognition of their hazardous duty
- Require Post management to provide the Guild with more frequent data summaries about merit payments and other salary increases, linked to department, race, age, years of service and other variables, which will allow the Guild to do a better job of identifying age, gender and race disparities in the workplace.

Ratification meetings have been scheduled for Tues., Nov. 15 at 12:30 and 1:30, at the Metropolitan AME Church around the corner on M St. A copy of the

tentative agreement **will be posted** as soon as possible on the Guild's local Web site, www.wbng.org. Some of the provisions in the tentative agreement depend on the contract being ratified by Nov. 18, next Friday.

The new agreement is also notable for what is **not** in it, including several potentially damaging changes in contract language that management was unable to win. Among them were management-initiated efforts to facilitate salary reductions for employees who change jobs at The Post; a downgrade for classified sales reps; and new wording that would have made it much easier for managers to fire employees without just cause.

But it does include some management-initiated changes, moderated during bargaining, that will affect some past practices.

Employees who earn compensatory time for working extra days will have a longer period of time to take a compensatory day off – and will have to wait longer if they opt for a payout. The agreement also caps at 12 the number of comp days an employee can be paid for each year.

Similarly, employees who earn comp time for working holidays will have up to six months to take the time off, but if they don't, their payoff will be delayed from three months to six.

Time limits for filing expenses have been tightened. So it will be very important to **file your expenses promptly** -- it's your money! And under company policy, you should fill out those forms **on work time**.

Expect, at some future date, to read your pay stubs electronically instead of in the mail. This was a big deal for management. The Guild insisted on being involved to ensure privacy and individual choice in this matter.

For people in the **20-Year Club**, the new twist, at management's insistence, is a **one-time choice**: You can earn 15 days of sick leave each year or take the option of 12 days, with three of those "personal days," which could be taken for any purpose. (Under the just-expired contract, 20-year veterans bounced back and forth between those two kinds of plans, depending on the level of their sick leave balance.) The Guild negotiated language to help employees who at some point may need to change their choice because they find themselves facing a serious medical problem.

Already, in large part because of management demands, about one in three jobs at The Post -- more than 600 jobs -- are **excluded from Guild protection**. This time, management wanted more exclusions. The Guild resisted and, under pressure, reached a compromise on a few positions in news in order to reach agreement.

Your Guild bargaining committee encourages you to read the language of the tentative agreement at www.wbng.org and to attend a ratification meeting. Additional meetings will be scheduled for evening and night shift workers. Comments will be accepted by e-mail at tharris@wbng.org.)

We also encourage you to provide us with a **home e-mail address**, because Post management has limited our ability to communicate at the workplace by e-mail.

Your Guild bargaining committee

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