



Washington-Baltimore Newspaper Guild @ RFA

November 22, 2005

GUILD MEMBERS GETTING MORE MONEY

RFA employees represented by the Guild are enjoying bigger paychecks. Pay raises bargained under the first union contract at RFA took effect in October. Guild-covered employees received raises of up to 18.5%.

Twenty-six members got raises topping 5% — including eleven members who got raises topping 10%.

The raises were part of a restructuring of the Broadcaster classification and the Administrative Assistant category. Under the agreement between the Guild and RFA management, all employees got a minimum 3% pay raise or a bonus and raise equaling 3%.

The vast majority of employees got pay raises in excess of 3%. Another raise is due in January. It will be tied to the increase for Federal workers.

As part of the Broadcaster restructuring, all Broadcasters were placed on a new three-level scale. Placement is supposed to be based on skill, experience and other criteria. Under our agreement with management the initial placement cannot be challenged through the grievance and arbitration process. But come next October, we regain our right to grieve and arbitrate such disputes.

WEB EDITORS NOW PART OF THE GUILD

The folks who put RFA on the web are now represented by the Guild.

RFA management converted six individuals who had been classified as contractors to employees in July. They work in the Korean, Uyghur, Mandarin, Tibetan and Vietnamese Language services.

The Guild and management are still talking about issues such as pay and seniority for the new Guild members. But as of October, they got raises ranging from 4.6% to 11% — proving once again — Guild membership pays!

DID YOU KNOW... that as of October there were 124-Guild covered employees at RFA. That makes RFA the third largest WBNG unit after the Washington Post, Baltimore Sun and Bureau of National Affairs.

NON-GUILD EMPLOYEE FIRED AFTER CRITICIZING NEW POLICY

The difference between being Guild-protected and not Guild-protected recently became abundantly clear.

An employee who criticized the new Information Systems policy was fired by RFA. Unfortunately for him, he had no Guild contract to protect him.

Under our contract, RFA can only fire a person for just cause. And when someone is disciplined — whether with discharge or otherwise — they have a right to take their case to an independent arbitrator. The arbitrator would decide whether the discipline was justified. RFA management would have to prove it was justified.

Our contract also requires “progressive” discipline, which means that in most cases there would have to be a warning before a discharge.

That’s one of the biggest differences between being union covered and not union covered — job security. The employee discharged by RFA after criticizing the policy has no recourse. He can not appeal the discharge to an outside arbitrator or force RFA to justify the discipline.

GUILD, RFA MANAGEMENT DISCUSS NEW POLICIES

The Guild and RFA management have begun talks about two policies recently issued by management.

Guild leaders told management clarifications are needed in both the Information Systems policy and the conflict of interest policy.

Members had raised concerns about a provision in the IS policy regarding RFA’s right to turn over material to a third party. At the meeting with the Guild, Human Resources Director Norm Thompson and General Counsel Patricia Ewing made it clear this could happen only in extreme cases such as information being subpoenaed by a court.

They said RFA does not monitor employee use of the Internet or email — though RFA does have that right. Management said only President Libby Liu could authorize electronic eavesdropping.

Thompson and Ewing also said the policy was not intended to bar the blanket use of software like screensavers. It also is not meant to bar plugging in any personal device. For instance reporters certainly can plug in cameras to download photos for the Web site.

They said a clarification could be coming.

In the conflict of interest policy, RFA managers said the main target of the policy are those in decision-making positions — not Guild employees. They do want you to report any possible conflict, but unless you had some way of influencing hire or handing out contracts you shouldn’t have anything to worry about.