



Washington-Baltimore Newspaper Guild @ RFA Bargaining Update # 9

February 5, 2008

CONTRACT RATIFIED MEMBERS SAY 'YES' BY WIDE MARGIN

RFA Guild members voted overwhelmingly February 4 to approve the new two-year contract with RFA.

The vote was 44-to-10. (Eight ballots cast by employees whose eligibility was in question were not counted).

The contract provides a four-percent, across-the-board increase retroactive to the first pay period in January. Guild-covered employees also will receive a 500 dollar "one-time cash award" July 1.

In January 2009 and 2010, Guild workers will receive the equivalent of the Federal government COLA plus one-percent. In addition, one percent of the total Guild payroll (currently about \$7 million) will be set aside in 2009 and 2010 and divided among Guild employees based on performance. This money will be in the form of one-time cash awards.

There was one significant take back — the maximum employer retirement contribution is reduced from 10.5 percent to 9.25 percent. If RFA management decides to increase the contribution for other RFA employees the increase would be extended to Guild employees.

The performance-based step increase that would've taken effect last October was eliminated — but is partially replaced with the \$500 July payment. Future step increases are now rolled into the January raise (the extra one percent) which is not based on performance, along with the one-percent performance pool money.

Other gains by employees include two "floating" holidays and an increase in the layoff notice from 30 to 60 days.

The new contract is far from perfect but is light-years better than what Guild bargainers faced just a few hours before the deadline. As late as Wednesday morning (January 30), management had been proposing a 2008 pay raise of just 2.24 percent. The 2009 and 2010 guaranteed raises would've been half the government COLA. Management also had proposed increasing the employee share of the health insurance premium from 25 percent to 28 percent. The tentative agreement was reached that afternoon.

The new contract will run until January 30, 2010.

BBG AGAIN PROPOSES CUTS

For the second consecutive year, the Broadcasting Board of Governors has proposed eliminating the Cantonese language service and sharply cutting the Tibetan service. The proposal is part of the Bush administration's proposed Fiscal Year 2009 budget.

The Guild again will go to Capitol Hill to try to reverse the cuts. As part of that effort, we want to involve as many RFA employees as possible. **If you have not already provided the name of your Congressman/Senator please contact Liu Hong (liuh@rfa.org Cantonese service) so we can begin coordinating visits/letters etc.**