

System Council U-4 Negotiation News



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Brothers and Sisters, on June 12, 2017 the System Committee and the Company brought to the table benefits proposals to be actively discussed by both parties. The Company wage proposal which had not been provided during the original exchange in April was finally presented for review. The amounts proposed fell short of the amount needed to reach or maintain a National Average. The System Committee will continue to take the position that we are to be paid (at a minimum) the equivalent to the national average of Investor Owned Utilities.

The Company presented approximately a dozen different proposals effecting changes to health care costs and benefits. First presented was their interest to continue to shift more cost of health care expenses upon the responsibilities of the Membership Participants. This is a very important proposal to the Company and at the same time the most emotional topic of the Bargaining Unit. This directly impacts our family stability; our members do not have any more blood to bleed. The Union is committed to the continued Joint Health Care Committee meetings and reviews to maintain the cost share percentages agreed to in the 2014 negotiations agreement.

The next proposal was to eliminate the replenishment of FMLA qualifying illness time-off being used by the employees. The use of FMLA sick time has exploded out of control and is being reviewed for possible proposed changes to address limitations and or total elimination.

The Company proposed the implementation of portions of the Obama Administrations Executive Order # 13706 allowing paid time off for health care wellness visits and caring for family members when they need assistance after or during a medical condition. This aligns in some ways with the Union proposal to clarify the language for approved usage of the "Sickness In Family" (SIF) benefit but the application and administration of the Company implementation are still very complex.

Long Term Disability and Short-Term Disability modifications were presented which are still under review to determine the effectiveness for cost savings and expense increments. The Company proposal on STD is for the simplification of administration by reducing the tiers of qualifying levels to one general level. The Long-Term Disability modifications on the other-hand appear to be an effort to reduce cost exposure by building in progressive rates and allowances determined by age and limiting medical benefit coverage.

Now that the Supreme Court has ruled that same-gender partners have the right to Marry,

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Medical coverage changes for those already covered is under review by the Company. The Company also has proposed that the fully insured plans should be allowed to be modified without the inclusion of the Bargaining Unit being advised of those changes prior to implementation. This proposal concerning fully insured plans was pulled after in-depth discussion between the parties.

The Company has once again in negotiations, like last negotiations; proposed to take away 1% of the members interest credit contained in Pension Plan structure calculation, along with reducing newly hired employees base pay credit back to the levels in 2000, by only applying 4.5% of their base pay as opposed to the negotiated 6% now being applied. After the Union presented the negotiated past documents identifying what was exchanged to reach the past agreement, and why the System Committee felt so strongly against the Company proposal, the items were pulled from the discussion and withdrawn. The System Committee entered into a TA on auto enrollment for new hires into the 401K Retire Savings Plan and also the enhancement of introducing the Roth option features to be included in the Plan.

The System Committee presented enhancements to accrued vacation time off by reducing the continuous years of service to obtain vacation time off. The changes would affect when an employee would receive four (4) weeks' vacation and five (5) weeks' vacation time off. The Company proposed to reduce the vacation carryover time from one hundred and twenty (120) hours to allowing only forty (40) hours to be carried over. These topics are active in discussions at this time.

The System Committee proposed to have all worked overtime hours applied to the Retiree Savings and Pension Credits structured calculations. Also introduced was the proposal to increase the basic credit by 1%, from 6% to 7% inclusive of the overtime earnings. The System Committee proposed increases to the Company match portion of the 401K savings plan up to 10%.

Recognizing the large disparity in the years of service table contained within the Short-Term Disability Plan (STD) the Union proposed to add a third tier to the level of benefits and to increase the 100% pay disbursement. The new tier would be for those employees between one to five years of service. The proposal is active in discussions.

The System Committee takes great pride in advancing our proposal to advance the health care services needed to assist our Brothers and Sisters with treatment for their children affected with Autism by putting forward the proposal to enhance Autism Spectrum Disorder Services to become a covered service. The Company is currently analyzing the cost of the implementation of this additional coverage.

The System Committee and the Company adjourned for the weekend with the discussions on Wages, Benefits and Health Care to resume on Monday June 19, 2017. The topics at the table in discussions are very important to both parties and their proposed changes equally to the Members they effect.

Your System Committee will continue to supply updates as negotiations progress and continues to urge all the Membership to remain focused on your safety and avoid the distractions by news that is released to the field.

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Provide the safest possible workplace
The most productive work methods
Unsurpassed professionalism and quality of work first time out.

“Yes, I Am My Brothers Keeper”

“United we Bargain, Divided we Beg”

