

Daily Labor Report

Los Angeles Guards' Tentative First Contract Would Increase Wages, Benefits 40 Percent

By Susan R. Hobbs, Thursday Jan. 24, 2008

The Service Employees International Union Security Officers United in Los Angeles Local 2006 Jan. 21 announced it has reached tentative agreement on a first contract with commercial building security contractor companies that would provide some 4,000 employees of with wages and health care benefit increases of 40 percent over the contract's five-year term and would establish a career ladder.

The tentative area-wide master agreement concludes seven months of negotiations with five security companies--Universal Protection Services, ABM Security Services Inc., Securitas USA, Guard Systems, and Allied Barton Security Services--that provide more than 80 percent of Los Angeles commercial buildings with onsite security personnel.

The Building Owners and Managers Association represented the employers during the negotiations.

"This groundbreaking agreement will start to reshape the landscape of Los Angeles not just for security officers, but for the entire community," said Faith Culbreath, president of SEIU SOULA Local 2006. "This tentative agreement gives us more than hope, but actual proof of a better future for African American workers in Los Angeles."

SEIU said that 70 percent of the guards are African American.

The union is withholding further details about the tentative agreement until after the ratification vote, scheduled for Jan. 26.

The security officers currently earn average hourly wages of \$8.50 without access to affordable health care benefits, according to the union.

"This is a victory for these hard working security officers and their families to be sure, and it is also a victory for all of us in the community. There are economic benefits to this achievement, of course, but more than that we are satisfied with the richness of the reward of our perseverance and belief that this day would come, that we would see with our own eyes the corporate real estate giants bow to justice," the Rev.

Dr. Lewis E. Logan II, senior pastor of Bethel AME Church in Los Angeles and leader of the Stand for Security Coalition, said in a statement. The coalition is a broad citywide coalition of religious and community leaders formed to support the security officers in their

drive to organize and reach a contract.

Years-Long Organizing Campaign

SEIU had been attempting to organize the security officers in Los Angeles for about five years. In November 2006, SEIU reached an agreement with BOMA for organizing neutrality for about half of the 10,000 commercial building security guards in Los Angeles (223 DLR A-9, 11/20/06). Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa (D) and Maguire Properties Inc., the city's largest commercial building owner, were instrumental in bringing about that agreement.

The security guards gained union representation by SEIU in May by union authorization card check (97 DLR A-10, 5/21/07).

Mayor Villaraigosa also helped the building owners and their security contractors reach the tentative settlement with the security officers, according to SEIU.

"Today we have a historic agreement that directly improves the lives of more than 4,000 hard-working Angelenos, and whose impact will be seen in families throughout South Los Angeles. This agreement has been six years in the making, and I could not be prouder that we were able to make it happen," the mayor said in a statement Jan. 21.

In April 2006, Maguire Properties and SEIU reached an agreement to provide organizing neutrality and training for the 300 building security officers who work at Maguire buildings (72 DLR A-6, 4/14/06).

Although Maguire Properties does not employ directly the security officers that work in its Los Angeles buildings, Maguire agreed to make its contractor firms' acceptance of the SEIU security officer organizing campaign a condition of doing business with Maguire Properties.

The tentative agreement covering security guards in Los Angeles follows a five-year contract ratified in December covering about 4,000 security guards represented by SEIU in the San Francisco area (240 DLR A-12, 12/14/07), reached after many months of negotiation, labor unrest, and a limited two-day strike.

SEIU represents 55,000 security officers throughout the country, including New York, Minneapolis, Chicago, and San Francisco.

Representatives of the security contract companies were not available for comment.