

Security Officers Seek Union Agreement in L.A.

LABOR *On the heels of Bay Area deal, SEIU and workers negotiate for increased wages, health care*

BY KEELEY WEBSTER
 CREJ Staff Writer

The union that represents Los Angeles security officers hopes to follow the lead of its counterparts in San Francisco, who reached a tentative agreement on Nov. 30 for a contract with security companies that would guarantee higher wages and family health care.

Union leaders and the security companies in San Francisco negotiated until 11 p.m. that Thursday, reaching an agreement that provides a 27 percent increase in salary and enhanced health care. On Dec. 12, it was announced that security workers voted overwhelmingly to approve the five-year pact.

"A lot of the same contractors involved in the Bay Area negotiations have contracts in Los Angeles," said Terence Long, a Service Employees International Union spokesman. "In Los Angeles, there were some meetings that were postponed to hammer home the Bay Area agreement. Now that's done and we are hoping the security officers in Los Angeles can win a good contract before the holidays."

Security guards in the East Bay and San Francisco had been working under a contract that expired on June 30. The expired contract was the first-ever negotiated for SEIU Local 24/7, which represents guards who work in Bay Area office buildings.

The Bay Area union held a strike in September in San Francisco's financial district, which was attended by 200 workers.

SEIU Local 2006, which represents 4,000 security officers in Los Angeles County, expected to resume negotiations with security companies on Dec. 20.

The Los Angeles union has been threatening to strike for a month and held two rallies in West Los Angeles within days of each other, each attended by some City Council members. Local 2006 voted to authorize a strike on Oct. 26, but had not agreed on a date, Long said.

"We need to professionalize the private security industry in order to improve security officers' training and coordination with the city's police, fire and emergency response teams," said Los Angeles City Councilman Bernard Parks. "This is how we achieve better public safety, with a good contract for security officers that provides decent wages and family health care."

Most of the county's security officers live in South Los Angeles and even though they work full-time protecting multibillion-dollar properties, they still earn wages that qualify them for food stamps and other public assistance, according to a statement from the SEIU Local 2006.

"By turning these dead-end security jobs into good jobs that you can raise a family on, we're really helping to rebuild the black middle class and bring dignity and respect to thousands of hard-working men, women and their families," said Los Angeles Councilman Herb Wesson, who worked as a security guard at one time.

The union's goal has been to achieve parity between the benefits and salaries received by other office building workers, such as the janitors, which the SEIU organized a union for several years ago, said Gina Bowers, an SEIU spokeswoman.

Security officers are the lowest-paid contract service workers in commercial real estate properties where union janitors, window washers, parking attendants and operating engineers



Howard Hansen, a security officer, center left, and Los Angeles City Councilwoman Janice Hahn marched in a Dec. 3 rally held in Century City that supported higher wages and better benefits for security officers who work in office buildings.

receive wages one can raise a family on and full family health care, Bowers said.

The Los Angeles security guards' union garnered the support of five office building owners in late November, three of whom issued a joint statement on Nov. 30 urging security companies to reach a resolution in negotiations with the union.

The office building owners' contract with security companies to provide security guards to protect their buildings.

Maguire Properties Inc. held a press conference in April 2006 with Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa in which it supported SEIU's efforts to form a union for security officers.

"We established our support of a security guard/janitorial union during the press conference held on April 21, 2006," said Peggy Moretti, a Maguire spokeswoman. "We were just stating that our support hasn't wavered."

Just recently, Maguire issued a joint statement with **Blackstone Group** and **Jamison Services** supporting higher wages and family health care for security officers.

Beacon Capital Partners Inc. and **RREEF** also sent letters to their security contractors indicating their support for raising the wages of security officers to the level of other union contract service employees who work in commercial properties.

"Blackstone supports the SEIU's goals of providing affordable family health insurance benefits to building security officers in Los Angeles," said Stuart Korshak, labor counsel for Blackstone. "We would encourage our security contractors to work together with the SEIU in a productive manner to reach a fair contract."

The Los Angeles City Council had passed a resolution in November urging Jamison to use union contractors for its security and janitorial services.

"We understand that there will be some increased costs to us as a result of these improvements, but we believe that these expenses ultimately add value for our investments and improve quality for our tenants," said Paul Kim, president of Jamison Services.

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