

Civil Service Employees Association, Inc.
Local 1000, AFSCME, AFL-CIO
143 Washington Avenue
Albany, New York 12210

MEMORANDUM

To: Local Government Local and Unit Presidents;
Private Sector Local Presidents

From: Mary E. Sullivan, Statewide President

Date: February 2022

Re: Procedures for Negotiations

I write to bring attention to two existing matters of policy concerning labor relations in CSEA. In addition, I am restating two CSEA practices in local governments having to do with communication during contract negotiations.

The first labor relations matter has to do with ratification of contracts and the appropriate ratification of interim changes to existing contracts. The second regards authorized signatures required for all negotiated contracts.

CSEA has a long and proud history of democracy within our union. Among the ways this democracy is exercised is the ratification of negotiated agreements. In order to maintain the high standard of democracy and member participation that exists within CSEA, all negotiated agreements for new and successor contracts require ratification by CSEA members in good standing.

This is also the case for occasions when significant changes are negotiated in an agreement during its term. These changes should also be ratified by a majority of CSEA members.

In both instances – new and successor contracts and any significant changes negotiated during the term of the contract – must be put before the appropriate CSEA membership for ratification. This is a matter of CSEA policy.

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Additionally, it is imperative that we ensure the execution of all collectively bargained agreements meet CSEA standards and requirements.

Accordingly, I am also reaffirming that all local government and private sector Collective Bargaining Agreements, including interim agreements, must include the signature of the appropriate Labor Relations Specialist.

Our staff is trained and experienced and is in the field to assist members with challenges that occur at the worksite. Key to our success as a union is a collective bargaining agreement that is as solid and clearly written as can be. The participation in bargaining and review and signature of the LRS helps us avoid complications down the road.

These two requirements are generally in practice today and this reminder should not generate changes in most bargaining units. However, where these procedures are not currently practiced, this policy should be adhered to immediately.

During these difficult economic times it may be tempting to reopen an existing contract to concede hard won wages and benefits to lessen the impact of threatened layoffs. We continue to stand firm against reopening agreements for concessions and for the integrity of the bargaining process.

Two long-standing issues regarding communication about contract negotiations should be stated as well.

As has been the practice for a number of years, CSEA refuses to "blackout" members from information regarding negotiations. This is CSEA policy. We must be free to communicate about bargaining sessions with CSEA membership during the course of negotiations to ensure members remain committed to the process, support the negotiating team and ultimately have a successful ratification. "Blackouts" have proven to have an adverse impact on a positive conclusion of negotiations.

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Communication issues have proven time and time again to be the number one issue among rank and file members when asked about union concerns. It is clear that our ability to ensure union member support in the negotiations process hinges on our ability to communicate effectively. It also impacts campaign activity and ratification. A lack of information about bargaining leads to mistrust, inactivity and disapproval.

Accordingly, it is CSEA policy that a communication plan to inform rank and file members about the status of bargaining will be part of every local government and private sector negotiating strategy. This communication can take a number of forms depending on the size of the unit and tone of negotiations but at the very least there must be regular updates to rank and file members about bargaining. Our ultimate goal in establishing this policy is to make certain CSEA members understand the struggle of bargaining and remain supportive of our negotiation teams regardless of the time it takes to reach a successful conclusion.

cc: CSEA Officers
Cabinet
Region Directors
Department Heads
Field Staff