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Union's Deal With Cuomo May Prevent 3,500 Layoffs

By THOMAS KAPLAN

New York's second-largest union of state workers, seeking to avoid thousands of layoffs that were set to begin this week, struck a last-minute deal with the Cuomo administration on Sunday on a revised package of wage and benefit concessions.

The agreement makes only minor changes to the labor contract that members of the union, the Public Employees Federation, [voted to reject last month](#). That result prompted Gov. [Andrew M. Cuomo](#) to order 3,500 layoffs, which he said were necessary to achieve the same savings that the concessions would have offered.

Mr. Cuomo said that if the agreement is approved by the union's executive board, which will consider it on Monday, he will suspend the layoffs, to allow time for the federation's 55,000 members to vote on whether to ratify the revised contract.

The first of the layoffs, which would amount to the state's largest wave of job cuts in two decades, were to take effect on Wednesday.

"I am confident that my administration has been more than reasonable and fair," Mr. Cuomo said in a statement. "Simply put, the fate of the members is in the union's hands. It's up to them."

The revised contract would last four years, instead of the five-year period set out in the original agreement. Workers would still be required to accept a three-year wage freeze, followed by a 2 percent raise in the contract's final year, and they would have to pay a greater share of their health insurance premiums.

The new deal also tinkers with the compensation for nine furlough days that the contract would require over the next two years. Workers would now be paid back at the end of the contract for all nine of the furlough days, instead of only four of them, but they would also forgo \$1,000 in bonuses that were part of the original deal.

"The changes we were able to obtain under this revised agreement address many of the concerns raised by our members," the president of the Public Employees Federation, Kenneth Brynien, said in a statement.

He said approval from the union's rank-and-file would "demonstrate that our members are willing to sacrifice to save the jobs of 3,496 of their co-workers and preserve the level of service to taxpayers."

Mr. Cuomo, in August, won ratification of a [labor agreement with the largest union](#) of state workers, the 66,000-member Civil Service Employees Association. But members of the federation last month voted 54 percent to 46 percent to reject a virtually identical contract, saying the concessions demanded were too harsh.

Some workers also complained that the layoff protections included in the deal — Mr. Cuomo promised workers immunity from broad layoffs for two years — were insufficient, though the union was unable to win any changes to that language in its new agreement with the governor.

Mr. Cuomo, in his negotiations with the federation after the failed vote, insisted that any revised agreement would have to produce the same savings for the state as the original pact, projected at \$75 million this year. A spokesman for the governor said Sunday that the tweaks to the deal would not diminish those savings.

A spokesman for the Civil Service Employees Association said that, at first glance, the union believed its agreement to be comparable to the revised deal with the federation, and that it did not intend to seek new negotiations with Mr. Cuomo.



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