



O.C. bus drivers may strike

Union leaders seek more money for workers. Strike could begin Tuesday if demands aren't met.

Thursday, April 26, 2007

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The Orange County Register

ORANGE – Hundreds of bus drivers could strike as soon as Tuesday if the Orange County Transportation Authority fails to meet demands over a new contract, a union representative with Teamsters Local 952 said Wednesday.

In its latest offer, OCTA said it would give its 1,100 coach operators a more than 13 percent increase in wages and benefits over three years. The amount is based on economic projections prepared by Chapman University, OCTA officials said.

"We have put a very generous offer on the table," OCTA Chief Executive Officer Art Leahy said in a statement.

But Patrick D. Kelly, secretary-treasurer of Local 952, said the proposed increase is not enough. He declined to state an acceptable percentage increase. But he did say that the sides are nearly \$3 million apart over the next three years.

"We need to protect our members against the inflation and slide in living standards that they are experiencing," Kelly said.

The OCTA has continued to provide bus service after union members voted to authorize a strike earlier this week.

The contract expires midnight Monday. The authority's Board of Directors approved a 30-day extension to the current contract, although Kelly said the union is rejecting the move. Through a mediator, union leaders are asking for a day-to-day contract extension with a 72-hour notice to strike.

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