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1,851 Layoff Notices Sent So Far As SEBAC Seeks Updated Deal With Malloy, Clarifying Details Of Original Deal

By Christopher Keating on July 20, 2011 2:05 PM | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(2\)](#)  [SHARE](#)    

Layoff notices continued to be sent out to state employees Wednesday - even as their union representatives are trying to reach a revised, no-layoff deal with Gov. Dannel P. Malloy.

The negotiators are hoping to craft an updated deal in the coming days that would be similar to the four-year, no-layoff provision that was made in exchange for two years of wage freezes and changes in pension and healthcare benefits.

Regardless of what happens with the negotiations, Malloy is moving ahead with the closures of the Bergin Correctional Institution on August 5 and another prison in the fall.

"The prison closings are going forward," Malloy's senior adviser, Roy Occhiogrosso, told reporters Wednesday. "They were always going to go forward. That pace has been accelerated, in part, because the agreement was voted down. But that was always going to happen."

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Later, Occhiogrosso added, "If there is an agreement, another prison will still close in addition to Bergin. In all likelihood, it will be Enfield. It might not happen by October 1, but soon after."

Following the rejection of the original deal by the rank-and-file union members, Malloy announced that the Enfield Correctional Institution would close by October 1. Since then, everyone from the employees themselves to state Sen. John Kissel to the local pizza shop employees have been concerned about the potential closure in Enfield.

The prison guards at Bergin will be transferred to other facilities after the prison closes - if the agreement is reached that there are no layoffs of unionized employees.

One of the problems is that thousands of unionized employees in 13 out of the 15 unions were scheduled to receive pay raises this month. About \$4 million in pay increases are scheduled to show up in paychecks on Friday, July 29, but the two sides are currently talking about the precise mechanism for stopping and retrieving that money.

The actual layoff notices had reached 1,851 state employees as of Wednesday morning, according to the administration. Those include 448 at the Department of Transportation, 282 at the Department of Developmental Services, 233 at the Department of Correction, 208 at the Department of Children and Families, 165 at the Department of Social Services, 93 and the Department of Motor Vehicles. The totals are part of an aggregate, cumulative list that includes all of the previous notices.

By bargaining unit, the biggest layoff notices are 348 at NP-2 for service and maintenance workers, 323 at P-2 for social and human services employees, 229 at NP-3 for administrative and clerical workers, 223 at NP-6 for paraprofessional healthcare workers, and 193 at NP-4 for correctional officers.

Most, if not all, of those layoffs would be rescinded under a revised deal with Malloy, who retains the ability to continue layoffs of non-union managers. The notices include only those in the executive branch - and do not include any notices in higher education or in the judicial and legislative branches.

"I think there's a real sense of urgency on both sides to get this done," Occhiogrosso said. "There's no deadline, but both sides feel a real sense of urgency to get this done. ... This is not a wholesale negotiation. I'm not going to predict when it's going to happen."

In other developments, Fox CT's Jennifer Bernstein reports:

Jon Pepe of AFSCME Local 391, representing the Connecticut State Prison Employees, said that a "no" vote on changing the by-laws came from the judicial marshals. The state police initially abstained from voting, but they had three days to record their vote.

Pepe voted for the original deal because he felt it "fixed the healthcare" for members, while a large percentage of his union members voted it down.

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Pepe was not in favor of changing the bylaws, saying they should have gone with the original by-laws and then tried to educate the union members on the plan's details.

"If people took the time to stop, pay attention, read the agreement, and ask questions, we wouldn't have a problem," Pepe said. "Now that they saw the Sustinet rumors were just rumors, and every other accusation proved to be false, they'll definitely take a better look at the agreement and understand it. Anyone who looks at it again, I'm confident would vote for it."

While the SEBAC talks are still ongoing, Pepe said that the union members are still concerned about Malloy possibly moving ahead with the already-announced facility closures at the Bergin Correctional Institution and the Enfield Correctional Institution.

"Yes, people are still worried about prisons being closed," Pepe said. "We will have to watch out for the new agreement. We are anxious about that."

A veteran, full-time state employee, who asked to remain anonymous due to fear of potential reprisals, is perturbed that the state employees will no longer receive the pay raises that were to be awarded - under contract - this month. She noted that Malloy had said there would be no major changes to the original union agreement that was reached in May.

"How is this not a major change?" the employee asked. "Those raises were negotiated. Does policy not matter anymore? Do contracts not matter? Why do we have unions if the governor can change their contracts on a whim? The unions changed the by-laws to require only a 57 percent majority to help save jobs, and right out of the gate, the governor wants more. So he's going to take what little we had left. Not to mention all of the retro taxes we will be hit with. At least the raise would've helped to offset that blow some. Just how much more does he expect us to give?"

The employee added, "Maybe I should go work for CIGNA and get some of their money. It must be nice to get cushy bonuses all the time. And be paid to move here. Maybe if he paid some of Grandma Rell's bills with those millions, those of us who already live here wouldn't be looking to move!"

But Occhiogrosso said that Malloy was not changing the original agreement regarding raises.

"With all due respect, this employee is incorrect when he or she says this is a major change," Occhiogrosso said. "Had that agreement been ratified, the raises would not have gone into effect. It's not any change. ... That first pay period will arrive, and people will get that money. There are ways to recoup that money, but asking people to send in a check is not one of them."

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