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[Home](#) > Malloy presses on with layoffs while hoping for a concession deal

## Malloy presses on with layoffs while hoping for a concession deal

Keith M. Phaneuf

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Though Gov. Dannel P. Malloy remains optimistic that a concession agreement again will be presented to state employee unions, the administration is proceeding with layoff plans, having notified over 1,850 employees to date, a top administration official said Wednesday.

Roy Occhiogrosso, Malloy's senior adviser, also said the governor anticipates talks begun this week to clarify the concession package rejected last month - and potentially prepare it for reconsideration by the 15 state unions - could be resolved by week's end.

One challenge involves raises of about 2.5 percent that many unionized employees received on July 1. The rejected concession plan called for a wage freeze both this fiscal year and next. The administration and unions also have talked about clarifying language regarding an employee wellness program that generated controversy.

"This needs to happen or not happen in the next few days," Occhiogrosso told Capitol reporters, adding that because the discussions are being held to clarify a few issues, and are "not a wholesale renegotiation," there is no need for prolonged talks. "I think there is a real sense of urgency on both sides to get this done."

A spokesman for the State Employees Bargaining Agent Coalition, Matt O'Connor, could not be reached immediately for comment afterward.

The administration, which rolled out a controversial plan last week to re-balance the state budget without the \$1.6 billion in savings originally intended to come from concessions over the next two years, will continue to operate under that plan unless and until a concession deal is ratified, Occhiogrosso said.

That means continuing to issue layoff notices and plan both for the closure of state facilities as well as cancellation or reduction of dozens of programs and services. Malloy's office released the first

list of 328 positions to be eliminated through layoffs last week and a second list with 1,523 more today.

The administration plan unveiled last Friday called for more than 3,600 layoffs in the Executive Branch and eliminated funding for more than 6,500 jobs, across all state government.

It also aimed to save more than \$21 million this fiscal year by closing armories, prisons, adult education centers, various agency branch offices, and group homes and respite centers for the developmentally disabled.

And the administration's \$43.2 million cut to this year's Judicial Branch budget prompted Chief Justice Chase T. Rogers to announce the closure of four courthouses and realignment of services in several others.

Occhiogrosso didn't provide specific numbers but said "a handful" of state employees actually have been removed from their jobs to date. Most of those that have received layoff notices still are employed in accordance with the warning period spelled out under their respective union contracts. Most unionized workers receive between two and eight weeks layoff notice before they must leave their jobs.

More than 60 percent of the 1,851 layoff notices served to date, a total of 1,123, come from four unions representing maintenance, clerical, health care and social service employees.

The administration's last update on layoff notices, provided on July 13, reported 328 notices served.

Though an approved concession deal would reverse nearly all layoffs to date, and others ordered between now and potential ratification, it would not cancel all of them, Occhiogrosso added.

Malloy and the General Assembly agreed to a net reduction of 23 departments and agencies in the new state budget, from 81 to 58. Technically, they removed 28 entities via consolidation, but they also created five new ones, eliminating a net total of 68 positions in the process.

The administration always has insisted on the right to eliminate positions - both union and non-union - in connection with planned consolidations, Occhiogrosso said. For example, he said, the closures of state prisons in Mansfield and Enfield were planned because of shrinking inmate numbers throughout the Correction Department, and will proceed regardless of whether a concession deal is ratified.

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