

Some Members of Local 2663 Calls For Re-Vote

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Christine Stuart file photo - Union rally at the state Capitol in February

The same day Gov. Dannel P. Malloy [told the Associated Press](#) he would send his chief labor negotiator to meet with union leaders to see if there's a clear path to ratification, one local union shared a petition for a re-vote with reporters.

More than 30 members of AFSCME Local 2663, a group of workers from the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities, wrote a letter to the 15 unions leaders asking for a re-vote.

AFSCME Local 2663 is one of the three unions in the [P-2 bargaining unit](#) and one of the four unions to vote against the \$1.6 billion concession package that included no wage increase for two years, 3 percent increases in the last three years, four years of job security, increases in the retirement age, and changes to pension and health benefits.

The [P-2 bargaining unit](#), which also represents employees from various social service agencies, voted 1,635 to 1,485 against the tentative agreement, putting the agreement on life support three days before voting ended.

“We request and hope that the unions of SEBAC will find a way to conduct a re-vote and will do so as quickly as possible so that we can approve the agreement,” reads the [petition](#), which was copied to Malloy. “We also request and hope that SEBAC can change its rule to allow a simple majority for passage and adoption of the agreement.”

“We understand that the employee concession package was comprehensively designed to save job security and stability in state employment, while it also promised to ensure the continued fiscal stability of the state and its support to its towns and cities.”

Union sources say it's not the first petition sent to union leadership and it's unclear if it will be the last as union leaders struggle to avoid layoffs and find a way to change its bylaws, which require 14 of the 15 unions and 80 percent of the voting members to ratify changes to the agreement.

“The letter shows rank and file union members aren’t willing to accept the status quo, if that means layoffs, degraded benefits, and restrictions to workers’ rights,” Matt O’Connor, SEBAC spokesman, said Thursday.

He said the unions want to get reconvene discussions as soon as possible and was glad to see there was mutual interest from Malloy.

But while some union members have offered suggestions for what it would take to get them to vote in favor of a concession deal, Malloy has maintained that he is only willing to clarify the deal already rejected by 4 of the 11 unions. In the meantime, Malloy said he is pressing forward with preparing a budget that will lay off more than 6,500 state employees. He said it’s not a road he wanted to take, but the defeat of the agreement left him no choice.

“This is not a time to be laying off 6,500 people,” Malloy said. “It wouldn’t be good for the economy, but if there’s not a choice then we move forward.”

Last week, the General Assembly increased Malloy’s rescission authority from 5 percent to 10 percent to allow him to more easily cut the two-year, \$40.11 billion budget without the \$1.6 billion concession package. The legislation gave the unions and the Malloy administration until Aug. 31 to strike another agreement.

But the clock is ticking and Malloy will be submitting his proposed reductions to legislative leaders on July 15. The legislature can then hold a public hearing on the proposal if it sees fit, but many lawmakers are holding out hope that a last-minute deal can be struck.

Rep. Diana Urban, D-North Stonington, who accompanied Malloy on his tour of the Mystic Aquarium on Tuesday, said the thing she most fears is the multiplier effect from the layoffs. She said that if there are no major changes in the agreement and it achieves the same amount of savings, then she thinks it’s possible the unions could eventually ratify it.

Sen. Andrew Maynard, D-Stonington, who also was on the tour, said he thinks the state should do whatever it can “within reason to avoid layoffs,” but ultimately that’s a decision that will be made by the governor.

“The public has come to expect us to ratify the agreement that’s there,” Maynard said.

House Minority Leader Lawrence Cafero, R-Norwalk, said in a phone interview Tuesday that he has to wonder who is running the state. The legislature and the governor, or the labor unions.

“Whose running the show here?” Cafero said.

He said the state should not sit back and let the unions do what they want to, then react. But he argued that is exactly what the bill they passed last week allows them to do.