

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Q: Why is there no “none of the above” option?

A: **You do have a right to vote yes or no.** The original reason there was no “none of the above” option on the ballot is because it would only take one bargaining unit to vote to not take concessions and the entire negotiations would have fallen apart. All of the gains would have been lost, and the County would have immediately enacted their “Plan B”, which would have resulted in layoffs and no post 97 retiree benefit. It was decided by the negotiation team that layoffs combined with the loss of all that we had bargained for could not be missed. This is the first “coalition” bargaining where all the groups agreed that we would put forward to our membership that the group who does not participate in wage reduction/concessions suffer the layoffs and does not benefit in the post 97 retiree health benefit. After consulting our legal counsel and to ensure that our contract gets ratified by the Board of County Commissioners in time to ensure that, if approved, none of our members have to pay a huge retro payment. Because individuals in *our membership* objected to waive the bylaws it forced the negotiation team, to mail out the ballots, to meet our 14 day deadline for the financial considerations. This negotiations was unique in that we are tied to other bargaining units for two very important decisions keeping the insurance committee intact, and providing retiree benefit for post 97 employees.

As always, we do encourage members to get involved with the Negotiating Team and their Board. There will be elections this year. Those who are interested in some of the ongoing issues that are discussed during negotiations will be interested in the release of the Negotiation Meetings minutes. This will be posted to the web site after the BCC has voted to approve our contract.

Q: How can I make a decision as to what option to choose when I don't know what my pre-tax medical amount will be since the only calculation has been single with zero dependents?

A: This is an individual amount for each employee depending upon their salary, their withholding and their tax bracket. It is based upon your taxable income, some employees have more money coming out for taxes than the withholding table by the IRS. You would first need to know what your tax bracket is. In discussing this issue with our accountant, you can either contact your tax advisor or look up your questions in Publication 15 of the IRS. We programmed the website to allow for employees to put their salaries in to get an estimate of what that would be, and because single with zero dependents is the highest amount, less may be deducted from your paycheck if you are married, with children, head of household, etc, all that is based upon your tax filing.

Q: It seems like it would be much easier to understand the calculator (and more straightforward) to eliminate the tax withholding part of the calculations. This is highly variable and misleading to some extent. If I take a flat 3.48% reduction in pay, what I

lose in gross pay each pay period is actually a certain amount before taxes. Can we have a straight calculations and formulas (without the calculations) Maybe we can have both?

A: You may choose to calculate that way if you would like. The formula's we put on the website is how the county formulates your percentage and yes it is highly variable. We encourage members to contact their tax advisor should you have questions regarding your personal percentage. We were asked to negotiate a concession that does not affect one's PERS and this was the best option we could offer. It is more complicated than just the wage cut, but everyone has reasons for choosing one option over the other. Unfortunately we could not create a spreadsheet or different formulas for every scenario.

Q: Why are the numbers different for each bargaining unit?

A: Originally, we wanted to average the numbers so that they would be the same for everyone. The problem is that legally, we must count votes separately for each bargaining unit. If the two bargaining units were to vote for different concessions (one for wages, the other for medical), the averages will not make up the total amount required. Therefore, the numbers had to be calculated separately for each unit. This is not ideal, but there is no other option, as bargaining units do have the right to vote separately for their choice of concession.

Q: Why is the non-supervisory wage percentage higher than the supervisory?

A: Due to the need to calculate the bargaining units separately, the values had to be calculated **based on the total labor costs of each unit**. As the County Manager indicated in her email several months ago, each bargaining unit was required to come up with a certain percentage of their total labor costs. That was then divided amongst the number of employees in that unit to come up with the concession amount. While the frustration is understandable, these numbers are correct. It should also be observed that the reverse of this is true for the medical concession – it is substantially higher for the supervisory group.

Q: When do the concessions end, if members choose the pre-tax medical is that “permanent”? Some are saying it will not dissolve on June 30, 2011?

A: No the pre-tax medical is not “permanent” all wage deductions end June 30, 2011. This is a one year contract, however, the benefit of post 97 retiree health being funded to the PEPB rate is permanent unless something different is negotiated at a later date. Pre-tax medical or wage will be deducted per pay period for FY 2010/2011 contract only.

Q: After retirement, does the portion that the County will pay toward our insurance premium continue if we elect to keep County insurance after medicare kicks in?

A: Once medicare kicks in the county will pay only up to what the secondary costs will be.

Q: How long do I have to work before for the county to be eligible for the retiree health benefit?

A: You have to work for five years and be vested, however, in order to get county benefit for retiree health you must retire from the county and not be employed by any other public sector job to receive county retiree health benefit. If you are post 97 employee the county will only pay equal to the State of Nevada PEBP subsidy payment until you are medicare eligible. The subsidy is based upon your years of service.

Q: What is the difference between the post-97 retirement health benefits and the benefits that were mandated in 2003?

A: There is no difference. In 2003, the Nevada Legislature passed AB286, which mandated that public employers who offered health insurance during employment also provide insurance in retirement. This was adopted into the WCEA contract, but had language that stated that should the legislation be changed the County would not have any responsibility for providing the benefit. In 2007, the Nevada Legislature passed AB544, which eliminated the County's responsibility to provide a retiree health benefit for all post-97 members.

Q: What are the benefits that are being provided for post-97 Washoe County employees?

A: The benefit that will be provided to all post-97 employees will be a health benefit subsidy to be applied to the cost of the employee's retiree health coverage within the County plan. The remaining cost would be paid by the employee. The level of subsidy is set at the level provided for by the Public Employees Benefit Program (the state retiree health program). You can find the current subsidy levels at <http://www.pebp.state.nv.us/plans/rates.htm>. There are options to look at both 2010 and 2011 rates. To find the actual subsidy based on years of service, open up either year and go to the page that lists non-state retiree subsidies (page 10 for 2010 and page 14 for 2011). Ignore all other tables and costs in the document, as they apply to the State's health care plan and are not relevant to the benefit.

When the employee becomes eligible for Medicare, then Medicare takes over as the primary insurance provider. We specifically negotiated that it is based on eligibility for Medicare rather than age because of the current flux in national health care policy. The County insurance becomes the secondary provider once this happens. From discussions with retirees and other members of the Insurance Negotiating Committee, this set up is provides great coverage at little to no expense for the retiree.

Q: Assume that an individual casts their ballot by mail and includes their vote for both Issue #1 and Issue #2. Then that individual goes to a polling location, claims they did not vote for issue#1, and proceeds to vote again on that issue. I am assuming that before the votes are tallied, there will be some sort of check to insure individuals have not voted twice for Issue #1, is this correct?

Assuming that check will be performed, how can that happen without compromising the “secret ballot” process? Won’t it be necessary to reference the name on the external envelope, open the “secret” envelope to see if an individual voted for Issue #1, and then cross reference the name to those that voted at the polling locations?

A: This is an excellent question and yes we have worked out a system with the CPA to separate everyone who showed up at the polls in a different box for the ballots they receive. Individuals can only vote on the ratifying of the contract at the polls not how they want the wage reduction. The count is done at one time on the same day, so we will have to ability to determine who voted in person and discount if any of them have written on the backside of the ballot because we have a separate color coded ballot in the ballot box. There are only three of us who have access to the ballot boxes and when the CPA opens them we compare the number of people who showed up to vote with the number of ballots in the box. That way when they count the ballots we only count the front of the actual ballot for those employees. **You can only vote to ratify the contract at the polling stations, so you only have one option to vote for there, you must vote for the choice of wage reduction through the mail on the original ballot.**

The CPA never has the list of names. We meet with them and cross check and separate them before the envelopes are opened. The day we actually do the count, we know for the ballots in the one box we only need to count the front because the employees showed up in person to vote for the wage concession and they will have filled out one of the other color coded ballot utilized to ratify the contract.

If you did not show up in person we count both sides. The CPA just knows that for one bunch only the front is counted the other bunch both sides are counted. We will have the list of who voted in person at the WCEA office, they won’t at the CPA office. The “secret ballot” isn’t opened until they actually do the count and that is done by the CPA and members who volunteer to assist in the count at the CPA office. By the time we count, those envelopes that were sent in and had people show up in person, will have already been separated. When the actual votes are counted, the external envelope has been discarded and only the “secret envelope” is opened the only difference this time, is we will segregate those envelopes where people showed up in person from the others, and only count the front.