

SPSE-UPTE Bargaining Bulletin from 11/10/2019 Session

We continued bargaining for your next contract on Sunday, November 10th.

Over 20 members turned out to support SPSE-UPTE. We faced the usual cast of seven LLNS bargainers led by Jennifer Szutu, Staff Relations Manager, and flanked by senior management from Facilities and Infrastructure and the Security Organization.

SPSE-UPTE Chief bargainer Steve Balke started the meeting off with a prepared statement condemning a threat made by LLNS at our last session October 23rd.

Local President Jim Wolford followed with a response to management's outrageous and baseless claim that the Union has violated federal law in its payroll deduction procedure.

SPSE-UPTE passed management two counterproposals. The first was the article on ancillary pay, wherein SPSE-UPTE proposes updating your call out payment minimum from 3 hours to 4 hours, raise your on-call pay from 14% to 20%, and give you "portal-to-portal" call-out timeframe. Our other proposal affects the Duration article that would change the term of the new contract to three years. It seeks to clarify the way the two sides communicate prior to the start of bargaining.

During the bargaining session, Bronson Shelly, the Lab's welding safety inspector spoke on behalf of the welders and testified on their skill level. Currently LLNS classifies the welders as "ornamental welders". However, we all know that our highly-skilled brothers are welding structural supports and pressure vessels, not fences and decorations.

At noon, two employees with Management's Compensation Division arrived to answer questions regarding the skilled trades market analysis that management based its opening wage proposal on. We at SPSE-UPTE noted flaws with their analysis. Most of the employers management uses to set hourly wages rates are public utilities and municipalities offering generous and secure pensions and depressed wages. Many lead positions are not covered at all in the survey, and the most highly populated position at LLNL—Electrician II—is represented by only two municipalities. Members at the table were only getting started pointing out these flaws. When questioned by membership, management had no substantive answers regarding the flaws in the survey.

After the market analysis discussion, management claimed that their original wage proposal and our proposal were “too far apart” and claimed they are not willing to meet in the middle. They refused to issue a counterproposal even though the norms of good-faith bargaining require it. They maintain that the A/C Shop, the High Voltage Shop, and the Instrument Shop are overpaid. For others, they remain adamant that a 1% pay increase is more than fair.

Needless to say, we disagree. We at SPSE-UPTTE demand equal pay for equal work and are fighting for fair wages.

--Skilled Trades Bargaining Team