

MEASURE: HB 2448
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SUBMITTED BY: Evan Wickersham



OREGON AFSCME
6025 E. Burnside, Portland, OR 97215
503-239-9858/800-792-0045/Fax 503-239-9441
www.oregonafscme.com

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Re: HB 2448

Good Morning, Chair Doherty and members of the committee, my name is Evan Wickersham. I am a Council Representative with Oregon AFSCME here on behalf of the membership.

I am here to relay the membership of Local 1442's – Columbia County Courthouse Employees experience with the current system of expedited bargaining.

Since 2009, Columbia County and Local 1442 have been parties to a collective bargaining agreement (CBA). Shortly after negotiations for the 2009 CBA the County approached the Union with concerns about their finances. As a result, the parties met, collaborated and came to an agreement for a small number of furloughs. This process played out again in fiscal year 2010-2011.

In early 2011 the County's posture changed. Ignoring the way the parties had previously discussed shortfalls, they delivered a letter informing the local of their "plan to implement twenty-six (26) furlough days for FY 2011-2012." This was a sharp change in the practice between the parties.

That letter triggered a timeline which left the Union the choice between acquiescing or demanding to bargain. The Union demanded to bargain.

From the first day we sat down with the County they made it clear that they were "not interested in layoffs" and needed all the furlough days. The Union presented one cost-saving measure after another, and plans that included a mix of layoffs and furloughs. The County came to the meetings and listened but made no counter proposals or moved one inch from their initial proposal. It was clear they intended to show up for ninety days and implement as the law allows.

As the 90 day bargaining period came to a close, and we had our last scheduled bargaining session the County made a counter proposal to impose 25 rather than 26 furlough days on the membership – arguably and unfortunately enough to satisfy the requirements of good faith bargaining.

A few days after the 90 day period expired the County implemented language in the collective bargaining agreement that allowed them to implement furloughs at their discretion. The membership suffered twenty five furlough days that year. A 10% cut in pay. But that's not all, in FY 2012-2013 the County gave notice of 25 more furlough days.

This year the County has discussed imposing a similar number of furlough days – meaning the membership is likely to see its 70th furlough day in three years. That's right seventy.

The collective bargaining agreement expires this summer – so for the first time the employees will have an opportunity to bargain the language that was implemented into their contract. Seventy furlough days later.

As it stands now, the parties are bargaining from asymmetrical positions. Employers know that if they run out the clock they can implement and the Union knows if they don't get a deal they are in hot water.

I urge you to consider this legislation as a measure to encourage employer's to engage in true good faith collective bargaining. This legislation makes sure that everyone has a little skin in the game and it creates accountability and the end of the process. That is a dynamic we should all be able to support.

Respectfully,

Evan Wickersham
Staff Representative
OR AFSCME Council 75