

NEWS CSEA NEWS

SOUTHERN REGION OFFICE • 568 STATE ROUTE 52 • BEACON, NY 12508

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
December 20, 2011

CONTACT: Jessica Ladlee
Work: (845) 831-1000

CSEA Westchester County Unit President Karen Pecora's response to Westchester County Executive Astorino's contract threats:

"If County Executive Astorino thinks that bullying and threatening the CSEA workforce is going to get us closer to a contract, he's wrong.

Astorino still fails to comprehend that negotiations for a 3,300 member bargaining unit don't revolve around one issue. CSEA declared impasse in negotiations because the county refused to participate in a reasonable discussion beyond health insurance contributions. Health insurance coverage is a complex issue that affects workers and their families in profound ways; it became clear that a mediator is needed to assist in a fair discussion of this and other important issues. We are proceeding to mediation with the hope that the assistance of a mediator will allow us to speed up this process.

A number of points in today's press release from the Astorino administration demand a response:

- Negotiations are serious business. Lives and livelihoods are at stake and preparation time is required.
- Negotiations require a level playing field for labor and management, including release time for employee representatives to bargain.
- Canadian prescription drug options are being used in dozens of municipalities across the state. Schenectady County even issued a press release stating that a Canadian drug plan saved that county's taxpayers \$9.4 million in the first five years it was used. Many private employers use Canadian prescription drug plans.
- Westchester County CSEA members pay substantial co-payments, drug costs, deductibles and other fees for their health insurance coverage.
- The median salary for a CSEA Westchester County member is \$62,000 per year and 55 percent of CSEA members are under the median salary. Astorino's press release lumps in all workers, including political appointees.
- It is absurd that Astorino would take issue with negotiation space; the only reason there was any discussion about it was because his administration initially and unilaterally chose inadequate space.
- CSEA has never refused to discuss the health care proposal made by the county; the union asked only for the county to discuss the other 30 proposals CSEA brought to the table, which could be negotiated to save the county money.
- CSEA never received any "Jobs for Savings" plan. The plan was presented to the media, to the public and at a Town Hall meeting, but never where it should have been presented, at the negotiations table.
- The CSEA Negotiating Committee has continually asked for the county to discuss the proposals that were introduced from the onset of negotiations; the only thing that was agreed to by the county was changing the title of 'vacation time' to 'annual time'."