

**Union talks could restore aid to poor**  
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# Union talks could restore aid to poor

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**Wage increases and job benefits are among the agenda items currently being negotiated between union and management officials of the Community action for Legal Services in a effort to end a two-week-old strike by legal staff that shut down 23 CALS clinics throughout the city.**

A 50-point demand by the union, the Legal Services Staff Association, seeking to upgrade its current contract and to provide specialized training to staff in order to serve more adequately its minority, non-English speaking, elderly and handicapped clients, was submitted before state mediator Sal Kreitman last Wednesday.

Neither union nor management officials involved with the negotiations would elaborate on specifics of the demands or the progress of the talks. And while both sides

appear less than optimistic about an early settlement, it is at least encouraging that the week-long stand-off on negotiation talks has finally ended, a union spokesman said.

"It's hard to say whether any progress has been made at this time," said Claudia Slovinsky, spokeswoman for LSSA.

The more than 350 lawyers, paralegal and clerical staff of CALS—a federally funded legal aid organization that processes civil cases at no cost to roughly 200 poor clients a day—staged the strike Nov. 14, with scores of clients endorsing the union's position.

"The main issue to us is protecting the contract we won after our strike two years ago, although we also have demands dealing with salaries, training and other issues," said Laura Friedman, LSSA's executive director.

But, according to Eileen Hoats, a spokeswoman for CALS management, what the union really wants "is a 48 percent raise, eight weeks paid vacation and unlimited sick leave." The union rejected a 17 percent pay raise management offered

and withdrew its original wage hike demand, Hoats said. "They are now asking for a 'substantial' wage increase," she added.

Several workers interviewed said they were merely seeking salaries comparable to those earned by staff of the Legal Aid Society, an organization similar to CALS.

"Workers at Legal Aid make \$23,000 a year for doing the same job that pays us \$16,000 a year," said union member Paula Harris-White, a CALS attorney who specializes in housing.