

Union wins huge wage hike for Legal Services workers

In the face of mounting pressure from elected officials, community leaders and strikers, Legal Services for New York City (LSNY) buckled, signing a contract with the Legal Services Staff Association (LSSA) that met each

of the union's key demands.

Combatting 16 weeks of delay tactics, false promises and outright obfuscation on the part of management, LSSA achieved a stunning victory over LSNY by securing for union members significant salary and pension increases, bonuses and an overhauled salary structure.

"This is a triumph for our union and a triumph for the entire labor movement in this country," said Anita Miller, LSSA president. "We defeated their attempt to hire replacement scabs, and now we can go back to providing the indigent community in this city with quality legal services."

"We're more than pleased," said Dwight Loines, president of the National Association of Legal Service Workers and vice president of District 65 of the United Auto Workers.

"Management turned cartwheels trying to break this union, and we fought it—united—every step of the way. What's more, this contract surpassed even our expectations. It's a model contract which will inspire legal services programs throughout the country."

Critical to the resolution of the strike, which began April 1, was management's concession to the union's demand for comparable wage increases for attorneys and support staff. The hotly contested stalemate over this issue ended triumphantly for the union, with LSNY committing to an 18 percent wage increase for attorneys in the first year of the contract and a 12 percent increase for support staff.

Altogether the overall wage increase for attorneys for the two-year contract is 24.5 percent and for support staff 17 percent. The terms of the new contract provide secretaries with double the increase of management's latest offer. In addition, both attorneys and staff will receive a bonus in the first week of August.

Similar victories were won regarding other union demands. Longtime Legal Services employees will receive a long-awaited infusion of funds into their pension plan. The new contract also includes a sexual harassment policy, something LSNY had formerly rejected out of hand.