

SENATOR YEE COMMENDS UC PATIENT CARE CONTRACT, URGES CONTRACT FOR SERVICE WORKERS

8,500 UC services workers left without contract, many living in poverty

SACRAMENTO – Senator Leland Yee (D-San Francisco/San Mateo) today commended the University of California (UC) and UC patient care workers represented by the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Local 3299, on settling a “long overdue” contract deal and urged the University to immediately resolve the contract with their service workers as well.

After a year long fight with the leadership of the UC, it was announced today that 11,500 patient care workers finally received a contract agreement. Union members will vote to approve the contract in early November. The 5 year contract includes a guaranteed longevity based step system, 20 percent increase over five years, minimum wage of \$14.50 by the end of the contract, overtime after shift, and bargaining rights on pension and healthcare.

“I am proud to have stood with UC workers in this fight for a fair contract,” said Yee. “I commend the University for settling this long overdue contract. I urge them to now immediately reach an agreement on the contract with their 8,500 services workers as well.”

“The wages of service workers are dramatically behind other hospitals and California’s community colleges, where workers average twenty-five percent more for the same work,” said Yee. “UC hospitals made over \$371 million in profits last year, yet they refuse to provide the workers a fair wage. While UC executives live high on the hog, workers, students, and patients are too often left in the cold.”

For service workers, wages are as low as \$10 an hour, and 96 percent of UC service workers are income eligible for at least one of the following public assistance programs: food stamps, WIC (women, infants, and children), public housing subsidies, and reduced lunch. Many work two or three jobs to meet their families’ basic needs.

In contrast, UC executives have consistently received double digit pay increases on already exorbitant salaries. Recently, the UC Board of Regents approved over \$800,000 for the President’s salary and perks. In addition, Regents have significantly increased student fees each year, making the state’s higher education system unaffordable for many students.

On numerous occasions, officials from the Office of the President have falsely stated that the service workers' salaries are contingent on the state budget. In fact, eighty percent of service worker salaries are not paid by state funds, but are paid under the UC hospital budget or are self-funded.

According to the state-appointed, independent fact finder Carol Vendrillo, these low wages are a matter of priorities and not a lack of resources. She noted, "UC has demonstrated the ability to increase compensation when it fits with certain priorities without any demonstrable link to a state funding source. It is time for UC to take a broader view of its priorities by honoring the important contribution that service workers make to the UC community and compensating them with wages that are in line with the competitive market rate."

In July, Yee joined workers in picketing the UC during a five-day strike. Yee has also authored several laws with the support of AFSCME. SB 190 (2007) – the Higher Education Governance Accountability Act – brought major transparency reforms to the UC in response to executive compensation scandals at the University. SB 1696 (2008) allows greater public access to UC contracts as well as audits and reviews of public agencies. SB 1370 protects employees from retaliation by administrators as a result of student speech.

Yee is also leading an effort to grant shared governance of the UC employee pension plan and protect employee whistleblowers from retaliation for reporting waste, fraud and abuse.

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