



# What's that you've heard about the Collective Bargaining Senate Recommendation?

Last week, the Collective Bargaining Senate supported a negotiating path that would significantly change SEA's contract with the State. The Senate also authorized direct discussions with the Legislature about issues that impact contract negotiations. Among the recommendations:

- Voluntary unpaid leaves of absence would allow employees covered by the CBA to “bank” funds that would be used to preserve other CBA-covered positions. Employees taking the voluntary leave would keep the same benefits, accrual and seniority dates. The unpaid wages would be deposited in a dedicated account, to allow monthly reporting of the total amount of donated wages and the number of jobs “saved” through the program.
- A new salary matrix that would freeze wages at current levels for one year. The new matrix would include 20 steps at one-year intervals. All employees would move to the matrix in the second year of the contract.
- “Total compensation package” options so employees can choose benefit plans that meet their personal priorities; for example, plans with lower co-pays, or plans with money for education or child care.
- Health care for future retirees and employees’ seniority rights would become part of the contract. Right now they are provided by statute and State Personnel Rules.

Because the new direction represents such a big change, there are lots of questions about the recommendations. This “Fact or Fiction?” chart answers the most common questions the Bargaining Team has heard so far. If you have other questions about the negotiations, please talk with your Chapter leadership – or, send the Bargaining Team an email at [cbac@seiu1984.org](mailto:cbac@seiu1984.org).

	<b>Fact or Fiction?</b>
Health care is going to cost me more	<b>Fiction.</b> Employees would have choices. You could choose a plan with the same co-pays and cost-sharing you have today. But if other things are more important to you, you could choose a plan with higher co-pays and cost sharing. It would be up to you to decide – each year – what your priorities are.
This is about concessions and bailing the State out, not doing something good for employees.	<b>Fiction.</b> Many members understand that today’s economic crisis isn’t about the State’s bad management – it’s bigger than that! Many of those same members believe a lot needs fixing and this might just be the best opportunity we have to turn things around. We can take this crisis and make positive change that saves and actually grows jobs, preserves affordable and quality healthcare for workers and retirees, and saves the State money too. We just have to be creative!
I’m going to be forced to take time off without pay	<b>Fiction.</b> The contract already allows anyone to take time off without pay but you lose certain rights when you do. Many members have said that they’d like to help save jobs and would volunteer to take time off without pay if they wouldn’t lose those rights. The new language makes that possible – so it helps those who want to take the time off without forcing anyone else to. It’s the flexibility members want without bringing harmful mandates into the contract.

<p>This makes retiree healthcare a contractual obligation in the future.</p>	<p><b>Fact.</b> Each time a new contract would be negotiated, the retiree health plan would be too. But only for people who retire after July 1, 2009. That way existing retirees would still have the health plan that they planned for when they saved their pennies for retirement. Moving today's retirees to a health plan that costs more money than they planned would be bad for their health if they couldn't afford medicine or to see their doctors. Tomorrow's retirees would face higher costs but with more benefits than today's retirees. Some may even choose to nest away health care dollars for retirement through the health plan they would choose today.</p>
<p>The waiting period between some step raises would be eliminated.</p>	<p><b>Fact.</b> A new salary scale with 20 steps at one-year intervals eliminates the longer waiting periods between today's step five, six, seven and eight. Without the new scale, there are at least four years in which workers have no step increases. A new scale changes that but will come with a one-year, across-the-board wage freeze.</p>
<p>We're losing good paying jobs to the private sector and we'll continue to in the future. Nothing we can do will change that.</p>	<p><b>Fiction.</b> Most management staff will privately admit that state jobs were privatized because their hands were tied – hiring more state workers was a taboo that they just couldn't get around. We can take this economic crisis and break that taboo if we show the State that we are the best choice for them in good times and in bad.</p>
<p>I could still lose my job and I wouldn't have any more rights than I do today.</p>	<p><b>Fiction.</b> The Governor wants to take bumping rights away. Our proposal would bring them into the contract.</p> <p>Some legislators think full-time workers should be laid off before part-time workers. But it costs more money to layoff full-time workers than part-time. This makes sure part-time workers are laid off first.</p> <p>The State doesn't have to continue to pay for health care for laid off workers – this changes that for up to six months.</p> <p>Today, laid off workers are discriminated against if rehired. This eliminates that discrimination.</p>
<p>Our proposal would take even more money out of my pocket than the Legislature's proposal to increase what we pay toward retirement.</p>	<p><b>Fiction.</b> The Legislature is looking at a lot of things that could cost us money – and hurt our retirees, too. If those things become a reality, sticking with today's contract and going "evergreen" may be best.</p> <p>The Bargaining Senate discussed this possibility. The Bargaining Team will recommend "evergreen" to the members if they are not able to negotiate a contract that will benefit members.</p>
<p>I need a college degree to get a better job that makes it easier to take care of my family. This plan will help me do that.</p>	<p><b>Fact.</b> If you need more education, you could choose a plan that provides you with money for college.</p>
<p>I don't need the health plan at all, but I could use help paying for child care. This plan will help me do that.</p>	<p><b>Fact.</b> If you don't need the health plan, you could choose a plan that provides you with money for child care.</p>
<p>This plan only helps the low wage workers; there's nothing in it for me.</p>	<p><b>Fiction.</b> Employees could choose a plan based on what their own priorities are. Because of a new salary scale, the potential for higher wages is there for all labor grades. There's something in this plan for everyone.</p>
<p>This is too much change at one time. We have too much on our plate right now and this isn't the time for so much change. We should just go evergreen right now.</p>	<p><b>Fiction.</b> With great challenge often comes the greatest opportunity to be brave and bold. There are very few times the State and employees must face the challenge together but this is one of them. If we are all brave and bold, it may just be the best time to fix what's been broken for a long time. Maintaining the status quo through evergreen doesn't fix anything.</p>