



## NWSEO Contract Connect

### Highlights

- Fresh venue, fresh attitudes?
- Some Positive Progress Made, with Tentative Agreements Signed on Many Sections of one Article.
- Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) Mediator Helpful at Negotiations

(June 22, 2018) Negotiations for the new NWS-NWSEO Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) continued in Sarasota, Florida, during a two-week session from June 4<sup>th</sup> through June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

Because of scheduling conflicts with our usual Florida negotiations location (NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service in St. Petersburg), negotiators on both sides had to scramble to find another location for us to meet for negotiations. Fortunately, the Sarasota County Emergency Operations Center was able to provide us with meeting space for the duration of our negotiations for this session. The logistics involved a much cozier meeting room, which initially seemed like it opened up negotiations in a more intimate fashion. The first day of negotiations also saw the return of Commissioner Delgado-Alberto, whose presence for the three sessions she attended tempered and regulated the mood in the room considerably.

Day one began with revisiting Article 21, Section 8. (Article 21 discusses shift scheduling for those who do not work rotating shifts). No tentative agreements were made, but there was a lot of discussion about the laws pertaining to Alternative Work Schedules. Then, talk shifted to Articles 8 and 9 (on Mid-Term Bargaining), and the President's new Executive Orders impacting labor management and how those will play out. Both Parties agreed to table those for the time being.

Then negotiations began on Article 24, Safety and Health, which dominated the rest of the first week of this negotiations session, as well as most of the second week. Good progress was made right off the bat, when the Agency accepted three of NWSEO's Sections. A NWSEO Section on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) created much debate, with Management stuck on the details of purchasing this necessary equipment to protect employees, and no agreement could be reached. During the last two days of week one, when the mediator was not present, there was more contention at the table.

Week two began with Article 24 and Delyne Kirkham serving as the NWSEO Chief Negotiator. Management had vehement objections to our inclusion of ensuring feminine hygiene products be available in NWS restrooms, although it is in the current contract.

Then work began on Article 41, on Surveys and Questionnaires, which is a new article introduced by NWSEO. There are many different surveys these days and this Article was written to provide appropriate arrangements for employees who choose to participate in a survey. Considerable time was spent on this article and numerous counters were sent, but no agreements were made.

Moving on to Article 42, on Pay, which is another new article introduced by NWSEO, in an effort to clear up what NWSEO Stewards have let us know are confusing aspects of pay, such as when compensatory time could be paid versus overtime, when overtime with night differential is appropriate, and what “stand-by” and “on call” pay is, and is **not**. Management contended that information on pay should only be addressed by OPM Fact Sheets. There are 52 OPM Fact Sheets on Pay and an additional 15 Fact Sheets on Premium Pay for a total of 72 Fact Sheets. NWSEO’s concern is that employees were getting lost in finding the information they needed to answer recurring questions about pay. Management scoffed at NWSEO’s concerns and noted our approach to “educate” the bargaining unit on pay issues should be handled by posting information on NWSEO bulletin boards or the union website. NWSEO explained how in the past pay problems were delayed in being addressed and this article was written to address those gaps. NWSEO proposed this article because there are constant problems with pay, for example NWSEO is settling a grievance right now over pay. Management did not find this article to be necessary and offered a short, boilerplate counter. No agreements were made here. Doesn’t management think it is important to give employees information to ensure they are paid correctly for the work performed?

Ditto for our newly-introduced article 43 on Furloughs. Management was adamant that furlough information does not belong in the CBA and should be posted on the NWSEO website, but NWSEO does not feel that the nwseo.org website is the appropriate place for NWS pay and furlough information. Nor should it be used for resources on these important, but NWS administrative, issues.

The week finished out with Dan Sobien resuming as Chief Negotiator, reviewing and discussing straggler items from all the articles discussed over this session. This negotiation session was productive as several more sections of Article 24 were signed as tentative agreements.

The next CBA negotiation session is scheduled for July 2nd - July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2018 in Silver Spring, MD.

The NWSEO Negotiation Team for this session included:

1. Dan Sobien, NWSEO President & Chief Negotiator, Meteorologist, Tampa Bay Area, WFO (Ruskin), FL
2. JoAnn Becker, NWSEO NCEP Region Chair, Senior Aviation Meteorologist, NCEP/ Lead Forecaster, Aviation Weather Center, Kansas City, MO
3. DeLyne Kirkham, Hydrometeorological Technician (HMT), Western Region, Persons with Disabilities Special Emphasis Program Manager, WFO Elko, NV
4. Christopher Jacobson, NWSEO Pacific Region Chair, Senior Meteorologist, WFO Honolulu, HI
5. Nathan Becker, Ph.D., NWSEO Pacific Region Vice Chair, Oceanographer, Senior Duty Scientist, Pacific Tsunami Warning Center, Ford Island, Honolulu, HI
6. Suzanne Sims, NWSEO Western Region Chair, Senior Meteorologist, WFO San Francisco Bay Area, Monterey, CA

The Agency/NWS Negotiation Team for this session included:

1. Kenneth Brown, J.D., National Weather Service Chief Negotiator - NOAA
2. David Murray, NWS Labor-Management Relations (LMR) Liaison, Silver Spring, MD
3. Michael Mercer, Chief, Environmental & Scientific Services Division, NWS/Alaska Region Headquarters, Anchorage, AK (week 1 only)
4. Sally Pavlow Johnson, Meteorologist in Charge, WFO St. Louis, MO (week 1 only)
5. Sam Albanese, Meteorologist in Charge, WFO Anchorage, AK (week 2 only)
6. Mike Vescio, Meteorologist in Charge, WFO Pendleton, OR (week 2 only)
7. Richard Okulski, Meteorologist in Charge, WFO Columbia, SC (week 2 only)

***Contract Connect***, the negotiation newsletter for bargaining unit employees from bargaining unit employees, brings the latest news from the negotiations table to you. It is distributed as quickly as possible after each CBA negotiation session.

**-NWSEO-**

**No one cares more for National Weather Service Employees than National Weather Service Employees.**

**No one works harder for National Weather Service Employees than National Weather Service Employees.  
We are NWSEO.**