



NEWS RELEASE

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DR&C finally gives union proper notice of farm worker layoff, upholding union contract

Westerville – Today, the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction gave Ohio’s largest state employee union appropriate notification that they intend to layoff the remaining prison farm workers. This comes after DR&C closed Ohio’s prison farms and sold off the farm equipment last year. Not only does the “layoff rationale” trigger certain rights for affected employees under the contract between the State of Ohio and the Ohio Civil Service Employees Association bargaining unit employees, it also is meant to make transparent to the taxpayers the reason for closing state facilities.

OCSEA’s contract with the state gives state bargaining unit employees layoff rights that can allow them to move into other available job positions. It also ensures the layoff process is fair for everyone. But for nearly a year, DR&C failed to give the union notification of the layoff or a rationale of why the farms were even closing.

OCSEA held a series of pickets protesting the farm closures and the impact it would have on employees, inmates and communities.

Under the OCSEA collective bargaining agreement with the state, DR&C is required to give appropriate notice and to bargain with the union when any closure is announced. In addition, the agency must provide the union with a rationale explaining the reasons for the closure and layoffs, all of which DR&C failed to do, until now.

Union leaders were particularly concerned that without the proper layoff notification and rationale, employees’ rights would have been compromised. Circumventing the contract could have left the layoff process up to a handful of people and led to managers picking and choosing the employees who got positions.

For the last year, the union has been demanding the agency serve a layoff rationale, even filing an Unfair Labor Practice and seeking an injunction from the court in an effort to protect the rights of affected employees.

“Our union contract ensures that employees have equal rights and protections, including in a layoff process. Not only do we have a process that treats everyone fairly, we have a procedure that both sides agreed to in contract negotiations,” said OCSEA President Chris Mabe.

“Making sure the process is a fair one is not always the easiest thing to do, but it’s always the right thing to do,” he said.

“We strongly opposed this layoff and the closures of these vital farm programs, but the layoff process will at least get our members a little closer to getting their lives back,” Mabe said.

The union is currently reviewing the layoff rationale to determine whether or not it should be challenged.

OCSEA represents approximately 30,000 state and local government employees who work in a wide range of security, regulatory, administrative, direct care, maintenance, customer service and other positions. OCSEA represents 8,600 employees in DR&C. For more information, contact Sally Meckling, 614-865-2602 or 614-404-3881 (cell).