



NWSEO Contract Connect

Highlights

- Some Positive Progress Made, with Tentative Agreements Signed on Several Sections of Articles
- Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) Mediator Very Helpful at Negotiations
- NWS Chief Negotiator's Childish Antics Continue to Hinder Progress

(May 21, 2018) Negotiations for the new NWS-NWSEO Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) continued in Silver Spring, Maryland, during a two-week session May 7th through May 18th, 2018.

For the second consecutive session, a third-party mediator from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) attended most of our meetings. The mediator *was a very big help* as he kept everyone's behavior in check, kept everyone focused on the work at hand, helped foster a collaborative and productive atmosphere and helped bring the Parties closer together on several sections of the CBA. However, during the few times when the mediator was not present, the childish antics previously exhibited by the NWS Chief negotiator returned with a vengeance. His bullying outburst turned negotiations into absolute chaos as his temper raged unchecked. He regressed into name calling and blatant rudeness which resulted in either an unwillingness or an inability to continue face to face negotiations. Fortunately, each time the mediator made himself present, as if by magic, the tone and demeanor of the NWS Chief Negotiator greatly improved, and he became more respectful, professional, and cooperative at the negotiation table.

At this negotiation session, the following Articles were discussed: Article 20 (Work Schedules of Shift Workers (NWSEO) / Work Schedules of Rotating Shift Workers (NWS)); Article 21 (Work Schedules for Employees Who Work on a Non-Rotating Shift Basis (NWSEO) / Work Schedules for People Who Do Not Work Rotating Shifts (NWS)) and Article 23 (Travel).

At the last negotiation session, the Parties made substantial progress throughout Article 23, with tentative agreements made on all but one section of the Article. For the lone section not agreed to, concerning travel upgrades, NWS originally proposed wording that was even more restrictive than what the Federal Travel Regulations (FTRs) allow. Both Parties discussed and agreed with the fact that commercial airline coach seats have gotten smaller and more cramped, and studies have shown that there is an increase in illness (like deep vein thrombosis/blood clots) attributed to this.

NWSEO proposed wording that would encourage supervisors, upon request of the traveler and to the extent practicable, to approve seating upgrades within the coach cabin (these are known as “Coach Plus”, “Coach Elite” or another similar identifier) not prohibited by applicable FTRs, and to note this approval on the travel authorization. While there was lively debate and counter proposals made by both Parties to tentatively agree to the remaining section and reach a tentative agreement on the entire Travel Article, an agreement was unable to be reached, and Management chose to table further discussion on Article 23.

Negotiations then shifted to Article 21. This Article was initially discussed by the Parties in February and March 2018 and summarized in the February and March editions of **Contract Connect**. The Parties continued a long discussion over which positions (e.g. Service Hydrologists (SHs), Port Meteorological Officers (PMOs), Information Technology Officers (ITOs), Administrative Support Assistants (ASAs), Electronics Technicians (ETs) and others) are covered under Article 21. NWSEO offered to leave the aforementioned Bargaining Unit (BU) employees covered by Article 21 if they are given the same rights and protections as those employees covered by Article 20, which means all employees (except for Regional and National HQ) would have both planning and fixed work schedules.

With the help of the mediator, the parties did make some progress within Article 21, and came to tentative agreements on sections related to work planning, WebTA and overtime. In order to break an impasse regarding Definitions of Article 21, NWSEO suggested using the existing 2001 CBA as the basis for discussions. Management agreed, and several definitions were tentatively agreed to.

For the last two days of this session, NWS spent much of the time in caucus and eventually switched gears from Article 21 and sent NWSEO extensive counter proposals on Article 21 and on NWS Article 8 (Labor Management Relations). These counter proposals were reviewed by the NWSEO negotiators and will be discussed at the next CBA negotiation session scheduled for June 4th - June 15th, 2018 in St. Petersburg, FL.

The NWSEO Negotiation Team for this session included:

1. Dan Sobien, NWSEO President & Chief Negotiator, Meteorologist, Tampa Bay Area, WFO (Ruskin), FL
2. John Werner, NWSEO Southern Region Chair, Lead Forecaster, WFO Mobile, AL
3. David Solano, NWSEO Secretary/Treasurer and Eastern Region Chair, Senior Hydro-Meteorologist, Middle Atlantic River Forecast Center, State College, PA
4. Mike Dion, NWSEO Headquarters Region Chair, Digital and Graphical Information Support Branch, NWS Headquarters, Silver Spring, MD
5. Christopher Jacobson, NWSEO Pacific Region Chair, Senior Meteorologist, WFO Honolulu, HI
6. DeLyne Kirkham, Hydrometeorological Technician (HMT), Western Region, Persons with Disabilities Special Emphasis Program Manager, WFO Elko, NV
7. Jim Brader, NWSEO Alaskan Region Chair, Lead Forecaster, WFO Fairbanks, AK (observer May 15)

The Agency/NWS Negotiation Team for this session included:

1. Kenneth Brown, J.D., National Weather Service Chief Negotiator - NOAA
2. Sam Albanese, Meteorologist in Charge, WFO Anchorage, AK (week 2 only)
3. Mike Vescio, Meteorologist in Charge, WFO Pendleton, OR
4. Michael Mercer, Chief, Environmental & Scientific Services Division, NWS/Alaska Region Headquarters, Anchorage, AK (week 1 only)

5. David Murray, NWS Labor-Management Relations (LMR) Liaison, Silver Spring, MD
6. Sally Pavlow Johnson, Meteorologist in Charge, WFO St. Louis, MO (week 1 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-

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National Weather Service Employees.**

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

We are NWSEO.