

NEWS

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SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY
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SPOs overwhelmingly accept arbitrator recommendation

In results announced today, the county's Specialized Peace Officers on Tuesday voted overwhelmingly in favor of accepting labor terms recommended in October by an independent arbitrator, avoiding an imposed set of terms approved by a majority of the Board of Supervisors last week. The unit last month voted against accepting the arbitrator's recommendation.

"We're proud of the Specialized Peace Officers for choosing the terms of their employment rather than settling for an imposed solution," said Board of Supervisors Chair Josie Gonzales. "These public safety professionals have joined a growing number of county employee groups who have recognized the current economic realities and agreed to terms that will help avoid layoffs and allow the county to continue to provide an acceptable level of service."

The Specialized Peace Officers include approximately 400 Probation Corrections Officers, Deputy Coroner Investigators, and Welfare Fraud Investigators. The arbitrator's recommendation was favored by 72 percent of the 277 members who voted on Tuesday.

The county began collective bargaining with the Specialized Peace Officers in February 2011 and reached two agreements with the unit's negotiators. But both agreements were rejected by the members. In October the sides selected an arbitrator, whose decision was recommended by the unit's negotiators but once again rejected by the members. This left the county with no choice but to consider imposing its last, best, and final offer from the collective bargaining process, which called for an additional 9 percent in salary cuts, among other provisions.

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The Board of Supervisors on December 13 voted 3-2 to impose those terms, but gave the members until December 22 to reconsider. Within days, the specialized peace officers moved to reconsider the arbitrator's recommendation.

"Given the priorities outlined in the Board of Supervisors' five-year economic plan, we made the difficult decision to impose," Chair Gonzales added. "We had to stand firm in order to ensure long-term employment and preserve public safety for our residents."

The Specialized Peace Officers join other groups such as the Specialized Peace Officer Supervisory (SPO/S) Unit, the county's firefighters, safety management, non-represented, water and sanitation workers, Local 12 General Fire Support, and the exempt group in accepting terms that make public service and public safety a priority.