

State employes talking strike after pay hike is rejected

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ALBANY — The state Civil Service Employees Association today was asking its members — 3,000 of whom work on Staten Island — to strike later this month in the wake of the Legislature's refusal to grant union members the 6 per cent pay hike they had sought.

The 147,000-member union began mailing out strike ballots early yesterday afternoon after a joint legislative committee, co-chaired by State Sen. John J. Marchi of Ward Hill, announced it agreed with Gov. Carey's position that the state could afford no more than a \$250 bonus for each of its CSEA workers.

"We find it highly objectionable and outrageous," a union spokesman said of the committee's finding, which was expected to be ratified by the Legislature today. The spokesman added that if the majority of the union's members vote to strike, the job action will begin at 8 a.m. July 21.

Some 3,000 CSEA members are employed at the Willowbrook Developmental Center, South Beach Psychiatric Center, the Arthur Kill Narcotics Rehabilitation Center, and at the Institute for Basic Research, which is located at the Willowbrook complex.

Negotiations on a pay rise for CSEA members were begun last January between

representatives of Carey and the union. The CSEA demanded from the outset a 6 per cent pay hike — which would cost the state about \$100 million — but Carey held out for the bonus arrangement, which carries a \$51-million price tag.

The matter went before an impartial mediating panel in April and, when Carey rejected that group's recommendation for the 6 per cent hike, the special joint legislative committee was formed.

In a report made public yesterday, Marchi's committee recommended that the Legislature adopt the governor's proposal for the flat \$250 bonus and maintain the regular pay increments called for

in a CSEA contract signed by the state two years ago.

"In substance, we validate the governor's stand," Marchi said at a press conference. "In our conscience, and against the state's revenue picture, this proposal reaches the limits of tolerance under the state's fiscal plan."

Marchi said the bonuses and standard pay increases for the 147,000 union members will cost \$51.4 million, a figure he claimed can be absorbed in the current \$10.4-billion state budget. The \$250 bonuses are expected to be included in worker's pay checks in the near future.

Asked about the union's threat to strike, the senator

warned that any more costly arrangement beyond the one-shot bonus could necessitate the firing of some state employes to balance off the fiscal impact of any pay raise.

"So many millions of dollars would mean so many positions," Marchi said.

Two members of the 12-man legislative committee disputed the majority's recommendation and contended that the state could afford to pay its workers between 6 and 8 per cent more out of current revenues without any state tax increases.

The two dissenters, Assemblyman Willis H. Stephens, R-Brewster, and Assemblyman Lloyd S. Riford, R-Auburn,

said the majority's position "has no rational basis when set against the general economic data as revealed by the record."

They added that the majority acted "contrary to both the interest of the public and the interest of employes involved."

The CSEA announced last week that it would order its members to strike — an action forbidden under state law — unless it received the full pay increase it was seeking. The first ballots were mailed to some of the 147,000 members yesterday, the union spokesman said, and should be returned within a week.