

State workers put off vote 10 days in disputed pact

Advance Albany Bureau

ALBANY — The Civil Service Employees Association, involved in a dispute with state officials over the interpretation of some parts of a 10-day-old wage hike pact, has decided to hold up a rank-and-file vote on the matter for "a week to 10 days."

Officials of the 145,000-member union had originally planned to mail out ballots by today, but announced the delay late yesterday because of continued disagreement over the application of wage hikes amounting to 14 per cent or \$1,400 over a two-year period.

Under the tentative agreement hammered out by state and CSEA negotiators on April 17, state workers are to receive raises amounting to the higher of 5 per cent of their current salaries or \$500, retroactive to April 1.

Another raise of 4 per cent or \$400 is to be paid on Oct. 1, while a final pay hike of 5 per cent or \$500 is due next April 1. Over its two-year life, the agreement will cost the state about \$220 million.

The current dispute centers on the application of those raises to the graded salary schedule for all state civil service employes that has been in effect since 1974. CSEA officials contend a new salary schedule was to be developed to reflect the average 14 per cent increase although, the union leaders say, the state plans to retain the old schedule.

Some CSEA members, including those at the South Beach Psychiatric Center, have pointed out that the failure to roll the 14 per cent pay hike into the basic salary schedule could actually result in

some workers losing money upon promotion to higher grade positions.

"We fully intend to stand by our interpretation of what the negotiating teams agreed to at the table and over the next week to 10 days we will continue to attempt to get the state to agree with our position," CSEA officials said in a statement issued yesterday.

The union officials said the mailing of ballots will be delayed "to allow a reasonable length of time to iron out a disagreement." If no agreement is reached, they added, "we'll review the options open to us and decide what action we must take."

The tentative agreement reached on April 17 averted a threatened strike set by the CSEA for the next day. The union represents about 4,000 employes at several state-run facilities on Staten Island.