

Union switch declared valid by state court

Advance Albany Bureau

ALBANY — More than 600 employees of the South Beach Psychiatric Center and Staten Island Developmental Center are represented today by a new union.

The state's highest court yesterday ruled that the Public Employees Federation (PEF) should represent the state's 45,000 professional, scientific and technical workers on the basis of an election held last April.

PEF defeated the Civil Service Employees Association in the contest, but the Appellate Division of state Supreme Court had disallowed the results, saying the state should first check CSEA charges that fraudulent votes had been cast.

The Court of Appeals, in ordering that PEF be certified as the union representing professional employees, said no such certification by the state was necessary.

"This is what I've been waiting for the last year," said Dr. Irving Jabitsky, PEF representative at South Beach Psychiatric Center. "Now we can begin the task of representing our employees.

Jabitsky estimates that 450 of South Beach's 900 employees will have their union affiliation switched to PEF as a result of the court decision. Several hundred employees at the Staten Island Developmental Center in Willowbrook are affected by the court ruling.

CSEA will continue to represent 100,000 state employees not considered part of the professional, scientific or technical.

The change, however, means that \$3.5 million in union dues will switch over to PEF, an offshoot of the New York State United Teachers Union.

Jabitsky said professional employees at South Beach voted for the switch because they believed CSEA was not adequately representing their interest. Instead, he said, CSEA worked largely on behalf of non-professional, lower-paid workers who make up the majority of its membership.