

CSEA votes to accept 3-year pact

Advance Albany Bureau

ALBANY — Members of the state Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA) have ratified a three-year contract despite opposition from employees at the Staten Island Developmental Center, Willowbrook.

The final tally, announced here last night, was 23,699 for ratification and 17,029 against it.

No breakdown was available of voting by individual CSEA chapters. But employees at the Staten Island Developmental Center, in an informal vote last month, overwhelmingly rejected the proposed contract.

Felton King, chapter president, said members objected to a bonus plan for top state employees, fearing that it would pit worker against worker.

Non-professional workers at the South Beach Psychiatric Center, Ocean Breeze, and the Institute for Basic Research, Willowbrook, are also covered by the new contract.

Professional employees at the three Island centers and other state facilities are represented by the Public Employees Federation. That union is currently bargaining with the Carey administration for a new contract.

CSEA President William McGowan said he was pleased with the vote, noting, "We got better than the (prison) guards and didn't have to spend 16 days on picket lines."

The state's prison guards struck for 16 days in a contract dispute with the state. The walkout, which ended Friday, was the cause for the delay in tabulating the CSEA results.

The contract gives workers a 7 percent wage hike in the first year, and between 3.5 and 7 percent raises in each of the other two years, depending on the rate of inflation. If inflation hits 9 percent, workers will get the full 7 percent.

About 20 retired CSEA members tallied the votes, checking Social Security numbers and signatures on the ballots. They were supervised by the union's election committee and its 54-member negotiating team.

The pact does away with automatic pay increments for longevity and institutes a merit system providing \$300 bonuses and accelerated promotion for hard workers.

The contract also gives the union \$250 per member to beef up dental coverage, subsidize prescription drug purchases by members and improve other health benefits.

The cost of the contract was estimated at \$199 million, with \$62.2 million of it payable this year.

Gov. Hugh Carey touted the plan for allowing state expenditures for salaries to remain below the rate of inflation and for starting up a merit plan he said would increase productivity and morale among state workers.