



NATIONAL LAWYERS GUILD

New York City Chapter
113 University Place - 8th Floor
New York, NY 10003
Telephone: 212-679-6018
Facsimile: 212-679-6178
Website: www.nlgnyc.org
Email: nlgnyc@igc.org

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May 16, 2013

Raun Rasmussen, Executive Director
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Legal Services, NYC
40 Worth Street, Suite 606
New York, NY 10013

The National Lawyers Guild-NYC Chapter fully supports the members of the Legal Services Staff Association UAW Local 2320 who were forced to go on strike on May 15. The Chapter urges the management of Legal Services NYC to immediately negotiate a fair contract with its staff. The current offer that was unacceptable to LSNYC staff fails to address key issues, including the ratio of management to staff. Currently Legal Services NYC has a ratio of 1 manager to every 3 bargaining unit employees, a seemingly wasteful ratio compared with the Legal Aid Society, which operates with 1 manager for every 5 employees.

Failing to address the issue of ratios, LSNYC instead attempts to slash healthcare benefits, virtually eliminating fertility treatments, a vitally needed service for couples trying to create a family. LSNYC also goes after 403(b) retirement benefits, seeking to cut them by 29%. For an organization that already offers its employees no pension, such cuts to retirement benefits are unpalatable.

Perhaps most alarmingly, these cuts do not just affect the employees of the organization, but will also diminish the client services central to the mission of Legal Services NYC. By undercutting employee benefits without a corresponding salary increase, LSNYC management force LSSA members out on strike, and the poor people of New York City who are served by LSNYC are denied the representation so critical to defending their rights.

We urge the management of Legal Services NYC to return to the bargaining table in good faith. The current offer from management would result in no cost-of-living salary increase, reduced healthcare, and cuts to retirement, and does not appear to be fiscally necessary. These givebacks will not serve the short-term interests of the staff, or the long-term interests of the organization and its clients. Looking upon an organization that prides itself on providing justice to vulnerable clients, we ask: Where is the justice for the staff of Legal Services NYC?

The National Lawyers Guild, founded in 1937, is the oldest and largest public interest/human rights bar organization in the United States. Its headquarters are in New York and it has chapters in every state.

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