

Argues Pattern Pact Lacking

SCOA Says Wage Talks at Impasse

By REUVEN BLAU

The Supreme Court Officers' Association has proclaimed that it is at an impasse in contract talks with the state's Office of Court Administration.

"We have been unable to resolve our outstanding issues," said SCOA President John McKillop. "We have submitted our core demands, but they were not responsive."

PERB Must Decide

If the Public Employment Relations Board agrees that the contract talks are stalled, it will appoint a mediator to try to revive negotiations. Should mediation fail, an arbitrator will hear presentations on the matters still in dispute and issue a non-binding fact-finding recommendation.

"The primary motivation is to find common ground, and to get the clock moving to fact-finding," Mr. McKillop said.

The SCOA, whose previous contract expired March 31, 2003, is the only state court employee union that has not agreed to the pattern-setting wage accord negotiated by the Civil Service Employees' Association last March.

"It's unfortunate that the process has reached this point, but we are hopeful the next stage of the process will resolve the issues," said OCA spokesman David Bookstaver.

Mr. McKillop rejected the pattern agreement because the SCOA was one of the only court unions that did not have its members placed in a higher salary grade under the reclassification plan initiated in 2002.

Broad-banding the court



JOHN MCKILLOP: OCA refuses to negotiate.

security titles is not a mandatory subject of collective-bargaining, and OCA officials have refused to address the issue in the context of contract negotiations.

Pact Excluded Sergeants

Mr. McKillop rejected an offer that would have raised Senior Court Officers from Judicial Grade 18 to 19 because that deal did not include boosting the more than 200 Sergeants he also represents from J.G. 19 to 20. "If they put everybody on the same line, it would essentially destroy the Sergeant title," Mr. McKillop contended.

The SCOA represents 1,433 SCOs and Sergeants who work at state courts in the city and several upstate counties. "The primary issues involve achieving equitable compensation for all those officers," Mr. McKillop said.

Insiders familiar with the state's offer indicated that OCA refused to place Court Sergeants higher on the salary scale because that would bring their wages too close to Court Clerks, who are still angry over being excluded from the reclassification plan.