



Allegheny County Council

County of Allegheny
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Legislation Text

File #: 11586-20, **Version:** 1

Motion of the Council of Allegheny County requesting that Block Communications, the Newspaper Guild of Pittsburgh, and all other unions representing employees of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette resume negotiations immediately, in order to resolve their current labor impasse without resorting to unilaterally imposed conditions of employment or a work stoppage.

WHEREAS, the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette ("P-G") is currently involved in a labor dispute that could spell the end of a daily newspaper in this city; and

WHEREAS, a free and objective press, staffed by highly trained and experienced journalists, is fundamentally necessary to the informed public debate necessary for a culture to flourish; and

WHEREAS, recently, three unions at the paper have authorized votes to go on strike; and

WHEREAS, the Post-Gazette's newsroom has not seen a pay increase in 14 years, and while newspapers themselves are experiencing financial hardships, the Post-Gazette's parent company, Block Communications, remains highly profitable through related businesses that it built on the backs of its newspapers in the preceding century; and

WHEREAS, Block Communications has hired an out-of-state law firm known for its anti-union tactics, and management, through its out-of-town lawyer, has broken off negotiations and announced that it will impose a contract that takes away important benefits from employees; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to this unilaterally established contract, the P-G employees' share of health insurance premium payments would more than double, and insurance coverage of healthcare expenses would not begin until a family has spent \$3,000 in co-pays; under this structure, health insurance for P-G employees will have an effective cost of \$10,000; and

WHEREAS, Block Communications also seeks to do away with seniority in layoffs, a practice that has shown over the past 50 years that it places older workers at great risk of losing their employment, and the P-G's publisher already has stated that it wants to fire the heads of the newsroom union; and

WHEREAS, another facet of the unilaterally established contract is an allowance for Block Communications to convert virtually any employee to part-time status, the practical impact of which is that newsroom jobs will no longer be family sustaining; and

WHEREAS, County Council is of the considered opinion that it is vitally important for both sides to agree to resolve this matter through reasoned discussion and fair negotiation; and

WHEREAS, while the Newspaper Guild of Pittsburgh and the other unions representing P-G employees have made it clear that they are willing to resume talks at any time, Block Communications has refused to avail themselves of this offer; and

WHEREAS, the last newspaper strike in the City of Pittsburgh resulted in the demise of a storied, civic institution known as The Pittsburgh Press, and since that time, the Post-Gazette has won two Pulitzer Prizes, been a finalist for those prizes three other times, and has been the newspaper of record for the City of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County; and

WHEREAS, it is accordingly the judgment of Council that a labor stoppage at the Post-Gazette would be detrimental to the residents of Allegheny County, the paper's employees, and to Block Communications itself;

The Council of the County of Allegheny therefore hereby moves as follows:

Allegheny County Council does hereby request that Block Communications, the Newspaper Guild of Pittsburgh, and all other labor unions representing employees of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette resume negotiations immediately, in order to resolve the current impasse without resorting to unilaterally imposed conditions of employment or a work stoppage.