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American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees: Red Cross workers win fair contract; call off planned strike

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Madison, WI – AFSCME Locals 1205 and 1558 ratified new contracts with American Red Cross last night, ending 16 months of negotiation attempts and calling off a strike scheduled to take place during the region's largest single-day blood drive.

"From the beginning, all the workers wanted was for their hard work to be recognized by their bosses with a fair contract," said AFSCME Council 32 Executive Director Patrick Wycoff. "To attain that, the workers had to take a stand. Make no mistake, the members' courage to strike the holiday blood drive was critical to reaching this agreement."

"After many months of negotiations, we have reached a fair contract with our employer," said Lora Parker of AFSCME Local 1205. "Our committee worked long hours to achieve it. Our union members came together in solidarity by using their voices and casting their votes to strike and to ratify. Now, we will be able to continue our mission to help our communities."

Tony Uecke of AFSCME Local 1558 added, "Blood collection services workers do what we do because we believe in the mission and care about our donors. This contract allows us and the Red Cross to continue our work while delivering fair compensation to our staff."

The new three-year agreements include retroactive bonus payments for 2021, retroactive wage increases of 6% for 2022 and 3% for 2023, access to excellent

United Steelworkers Health and Welfare Fund insurance benefits, and matching 6% and 3% increases to the contract's progressive wage schedules. The matching wage schedule increases, in particular, were a top priority throughout negotiations for the employees. The Red Cross consistently rejected these proposals until minutes before last night's vote.

"The bargaining log-jam broke when the Red Cross agreed to our final proposals to increase the wage schedules by 6% and 3% over the next two years, just as our ratification meeting was starting," said AFSCME Council 32 Staff Representative Neil Rainford. "Progressive, fully-funded wage schedules will allow the Red Cross to attract and retain badly-needed staff to collect and process blood for area hospitals."

The newly ratified contracts take effect immediately and will expire on December 31, 2024