

City Rejects Offer Of School-Aide Union; Layoffs This Week

By MARK TOOR | Posted: Monday, October 3, 2011 5:00 pm

District Council 37 Local 372 said last week that the Bloomberg administration had rejected its offer aimed at preventing the layoffs of 777 School Aides, Parent Coordinators and other Department of Education support staffers, and that members would start losing their jobs Oct. 7.

Santos Crespo, president of the local, said in an interview Sept. 30 that the union wasn't done fighting. He said the first port of appeal is the City Council. "It's going to be tough," he said, "but I can tell you it's also going to get nasty."

He said the administration would not accept the union's offer to reduce the number of hours its members work above the four-hour daily minimum and give up two floating holidays, one for Election Day and one for Brooklyn-Queens Day.

Poorest Districts Hit Hardest

Mr. Crespo claimed that DOE had overstated its budget deficit, claiming it was \$38 million. The union and the City Council estimate it as \$22 million to \$25 million, he said. He also charged that the layoffs were being made disproportionately in lower-income school districts, violating a policy put in place by former Schools Chancellor Joel Klein.

Members facing layoff include former welfare recipients who worked their way off the rolls and single parents whose children are enrolled in the district where they work. The money that was spent paying them, he said, will now be going to provide them welfare and Medicaid. "What savings is that actually?" he asked.

Local 372 has allies on the City Council, Mr. Crespo said, and he hopes they schedule hearings on the layoffs. "This is not an economic issue," he said. "This is politics." He asserted that Mayor Bloomberg is looking to privatize school operations.

Mr. Bloomberg's press office did not respond to a request for comment. At the DOE, the phone in the press office was picked up by voice-mail.