

School Safety Agent Pay Case Bolstered By Bad Conditions

By DAVID SIMS | Posted: Monday, March 11, 2013 5:00 pm

A class-action lawsuit alleging that School Safety Agents are underpaid because of sexism, filed by Teamsters Local 237 in 2010, has gained steam after hundreds of depositions by workers laid bare shocking conditions in the city's schools, including gang violence, students wielding knives and even low-level prostitution.

The lawsuit, filed March 5, 2010, alleged that the female-dominated title was paid \$7,000 less than Special Officers, also represented by Local 237 but predominantly men.

Seventy percent of School Safety Agents are women; they make a maximum of \$35,349 a year even though they are under the purview of the Police Department. Local 237 President Gregory Floyd has long charged that pattern bargaining has widened the gap over the years—it is now nearly \$9,000.

Knives and Bats

The lawsuit contains some 175 depositions from School Safety Agents alleging specific problems in their schools. At DeWitt Clinton High School, they have confiscated knives and improvised bats from students; at J.H.S. 190 in Queens, a female student was compelled to have sex with 17 boys as part of a gang initiation; at I.S. 172 in Harlem, a girl sold sexual favors for a dollar, with a classmate acting as pimp.

Mr. Floyd said the depositions had renewed interest in the case, with the Daily News writing a lengthy article on the lurid claims.

“This was really a story on school security that turned into a bigger story,” he said. “The suit, I don’t know if it’s progressing, but it’s an active lawsuit; it hasn’t been dismissed. The judge is actively looking at the case.”

A hearing was scheduled for March 11, he said, and the union will continue to pursue the case. Although there has been little progress on any contract negotiations with municipal unions, Mr. Floyd is still seeking salary increases for School Safety Agents to bring them to parity with Special Officers, whose maximum is approximately \$44,000.

“There are ways to make people equal in New York City. Absent of the pattern, there are ways of getting around that,” he said. “With the pattern, the gap only gets wider...they should bring the pay up.”