

IBT's Hoffa Takes Up Cudgel For School Safety Agents in Pay Case

By DAVID SIMS | Posted: Monday, March 18, 2013 5:15 pm

Teamsters Local 237 President Gregory Floyd and Teamsters International President James P. Hoffa March 13 called on the city to settle a pay-equity lawsuit over School Safety Agent salaries that alleges the title's comparatively low salary results from a gender bias towards the female-dominated title.

The union's Federal class-action lawsuit, which is being heard by Judge Sidney Stein, was filed in 2010 but received more attention recently when School Safety Agents' accounts of dire conditions in schools were publicly disclosed.

'No More Lip Service'

Mr. Floyd said, "We are calling on Mayor Bloomberg to negotiate the settlement and not just give us lip service through the month of March, Women's History Month."

"This union filed a lawsuit along with School Safety Agents to remedy one of the largest examples of pay inequity in New York and possibly the nation," he continued. "Yet here we are today three years later and the city still refuses to negotiate a settlement." The Local 237 leader has cited a gap of at least \$7,000 between the \$35,349 maximum salary for the title and another, male-dominated title he represents, Special Officer, to make his case.

Mr. Hoffa said the differences between School Safety Agents, who work in Department of Education schools, and Special Officers, who patrol housing projects, hospitals and work in a myriad of city agencies, were slim.

"There are more than 5,000 of the School Safety Agents," he said. "They have the same training. They go through the same risks. They have the same power of arrest as the other agents. But what's the difference? They are basically female, Latino and African-American.

'No Justification' for Gap

"Special Officers are basically male," he continued. "We believe this is a gender-based lawsuit. And the \$7,000, there is no justification. It is dangerous out there—regularly they are finding guns, knives, clubs, regularly confiscating them."

Mr. Hoffa "demanded" that the Mayor negotiate a settlement. The union has not defined its terms for a settlement, but is thought to be seeking at least salary equity for School Safety Agents going forward, probably with some kind of retroactive award built in as well.

"Fair settlements are always better than courtroom battles," attorney James Linsey said. "The best

battle is the battle that ends with a handshake and a fair deal.”

The city’s Law Department said it could not comment on pending litigation.