

Allege NYPD Improperly Restricts School Agents

By DAVID SIMS | Posted: Monday, March 25, 2013 5:30 pm

Police Department officials wrongly blocked all School Safety Agents from taking two particular days off, most likely to bar them from attending court hearings of the Teamsters Local 237 class-action lawsuit over the title's low pay, the union charged in a March 18 grievance.

The union has been packing the court with members as a show of support for every hearing in front of Federal Judge Sidney Stein; if the hearing falls on a school day, the agents request to take the day off.

Discouraging Attendance

In advance of the next court date, May 22, the NYPD's Director of Patrol Operations for its School Safety Division, Ramon Garcia, sent out a memo saying there would be "NO EXCUSALS" on that date. He also barred excusals for June 19, although Local 237 said this date appeared to have been picked arbitrarily.

"Five thousand of the agents are plaintiffs in a legal action pursuant to the Equal Pay Act," Local 237 Grievance Coordinator Todd Rubinstein wrote to Labor Relations Commissioner James F. Hanley. "This proceeding was initiated by Local 237 and continues to be supported by Local 237."

The lawsuit charges that School Safety Agents are paid at least \$7,000 less than Special Officers because of gender bias; the titles perform very similar functions but School Safety Agents are 70 percent women while Special Officers are predominantly men.

Some 300 to 400 Local 237 members appeared at the last hearing before Judge Stein, the union estimated.

'Violates Own Policy'

"According to the attached section of the NYPD Patrol Guide, 12 percent of a command can be absent on any given day," Mr. Rubinstein continued. "The failure of the Police Department to permit any School Safety Agents to take annual leave on a court date is a violation of their own policy."

While the union is "uncertain why the Police Department arbitrarily chose June 19, 2013 not to grant leaves," doing so "also represents a violation of the Patrol Guide," Mr. Rubinstein said.

The grievance was filed at Step III because of the number of union members affected.

The NYPD did not respond to requests for comment.