

Mayoral Hopefuls: We'd Fix School-Agent Pay

By DAVID SIMS | Posted: Monday, May 13, 2013 5:00 pm

Teamsters Local 237 has so far failed to bring the city to the negotiating table in its pay-equity lawsuit over School Safety Agents' salaries, but may have a more receptive ear from the next Mayor, if the National Organization for Women's May 7 mayoral forum is any evidence.

Six mayoral candidates were asked what they'd do about the case, which charges that the majority-female School Safety Agents make roughly \$7,000 less than majority-male security officers in city hospitals despite having the same job duties.

De Blasio: Settle Quickly

"I would settle that lawsuit immediately. There is no question," Public Advocate Bill de Blasio said. "People who do security work deserve not only respect, they deserve equal pay. Absolutely, it's a no-brainer."

When the forum's moderator, Joyce Purnick, asked how he'd pay for the equalization, he said, "You're talking about, in the scheme of things, a very modest cost in a \$70-billion budget. You're talking about a \$7,000 differential over thousands of people. I assure you, we can pay for it...it's just something we have to make a priority."

City Council Speaker Christine Quinn agreed, saying, "I would absolutely be at the table with '237' and find a way to settle this. It shouldn't have gotten to this point, but now that we're in court we need to settle this case."

She said Mr. de Blasio was right that the money could be found in the budget. "The financial resources are there for this. These are individuals who are doing the same work but getting different pay. That's just not acceptable."

Liu: 'Equality Priceless'

"It's not a matter of budget, it's a matter of equality, and you can't put a price tag on equality," said City Comptroller John C. Liu, who added he would comb the city's ranks for other examples of pay inequity.

Former Comptroller William C. Thompson Jr. put in, "The fact that '237' had to bring this suit is ridiculous. The fact that New York City prides itself on being the greatest city in the world...we should not be supporting pay inequities."

Even Republican candidates Joseph Lhota and Adolfo Carrion Jr. seemed receptive to settling the matter, although they were less familiar with the case. Mr. Lhota initially thought Ms. Purnick was

comparing the pay of school Crossing Guards with that of Hospital Police before she corrected him.

“There’s no place in our society for pay inequity like that,” Mr. Lhota said. “All people in the same job category should make the same amount of money. I don’t understand why that is, and as Mayor I will make sure there is equity.”

Mr. Carrion called the current situation “absolutely and entirely unacceptable,” adding, “I would ensure that that is addressed on day one. It has to be in your inaugural speech.”