

US - NEW YORK - Statement from TWU-Local 100 President Roger Toussaint on Contract Vote Outcome

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"We are disappointed to report that the members of our Union have voted not to ratify the agreement that we reached with the MTA. More than 22,000 votes were cast and the margin was only seven votes. 11,234 votes were cast against and 11,227 were cast in favor.

We believe that this result is the product of a number of negative and inappropriate influences. First, the Governor. As soon as our contract was announced, the Governor pronounced that the deal was too rich. As you will recall, a number of the media picked up on the Governor's campaign and called our agreement "the Great Train Robbery" and the like.

The Governor went further and threatened to veto a key element of it: the pension refund. When he learned that we had agreed to a backstop to protect against that veto, he complained publicly and indicated that he would look to have the MTA board decline to ratify.

The net effect of those unfortunate and irresponsible remarks was that our members came to doubt that the key benefits of the deal would be forthcoming.

Second, there has been a considerable amount of disinformation and downright lies peddled about the terms of our agreement. Our members are intelligent, responsible individuals. However, a number of those who were campaigning against the contract were feeding our members with gross lies about the terms of the agreement.

Third, you have to take this contract in context. Our administration has prided itself on being one that will fight the MTA. We have fought the MTA's mistreatment of our members in litigation and we have fought in negotiations. That is who we are and we are not going to change.

We very well know that when you fight the MTA, the MTA will hit back. That has not deterred us and will never deter us.

When you get into a contract fight with the MTA, the MTA will fight back. Compromises will have to be made and we made some in reaching this agreement. We agreed to a 1.5% contribution to offset the costs of retiree health benefits. We did that in conjunction with securing new retiree health coverage that would, for the first time, have allowed full coverage in retirement.

The administration of this union empowered our members in every aspect of this struggle. We formulated our bargaining goals based on our members' interests. We empowered our members to vote on a strike. We empowered our members to vote on whether to accept the contract that we had negotiated. We will continue to empower our members to make the essential decisions that affect our work lives.

We will communicate with the MTA the results of this vote and we will reach out to them to meet in the immediate future. We will be meeting with our Executive Board. For the time being, we are reserving all other options."

<http://www.twulocal100.org>