

IUOE Director of Public Employees Meets with Governor's Labor Czar Caltrans to Hire 1,000 New Workers

Several weeks ago, IUOE representatives met with the Governor's labor czar to talk about the need for geographic pay differentials for bargaining unit 12 and 13 employees.

What prompted this meeting were two things. First was CalHR's and the Department of Finance's failure to fully recognize the on-going recruitment and retention (R&R) problems for our skilled-trades members during this last round of contract negotiations and second was our meeting with the Department of Transportation, Labor Relations Office regarding their bid to hire an additional 1,000 workers as a result of the infrastructure bill, Senate Bill 1.

During our meeting with Caltrans, they shared with us that the bulk of the 1,000 new hires will be unit 12 workers. However, they couldn't say how many would be in each classification, but they did tell us that before they could hire any new employees with the SB 1 funds they had to fill existing vacancies in those classifications, and herein lies the problem.

Just like DGS, CDCR, and many other departments that employ hundreds of unit 12 and 13 workers, Caltrans is also having a significant problem with recruitment and retention of skilled and semi-skilled trades workers.

The core of these R&R problems are the result of a one-size fits all pay system for State employees. An electrician or heavy equipment operator makes the same whether they work and live in Modesto or the Bay Area. So as you can expect the State is having a very difficult time recruiting or retaining employees in high cost and remote areas.

Unlike the State's one-size fits all pay system, the Federal Government has Locality Pay Adjustments based upon where you work. For example, if you are a plumber or water treatment operator working for the federal government you would receive a 39% locality pay adjustment if you lived and worked in the Bay Area. For the Los Angeles Area the adjustment is 29% and for San Diego 26%. As you can see this makes perfect sense on how to structure a statewide or even nationwide pay system.