

NEW 6-YEAR CONTRACT FOR SUNY UNION

Yearly wage hikes, family leave benefits in deal with state

BY KESHIA CLUKEY
keshia.clukey@newsday.com

The state has reached a six-year contract agreement with United University Professions, the union representing SUNY employees, Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo announced last week.

The contract includes 2 percent wage increases each year through the 2021-22 school year, access to paid family leave benefits and a newly established minimum compensation level for part-time faculty.

The state's last contract with UUP, the nation's largest higher-education union, ended in July 1, 2016, and the new contract is retroactive to then. It affects more than 35,000 employees of the State University of New York system, including thousands of faculty and staff members at the four-year



The Campus Center at Farmingdale State College, which has about 1,100 members in its United University Professions chapter.

SUNY schools on Long Island.

"We've been waiting a long time for this, and we were very pleased that it finally was expedited and it finally became a reality," said Vicki Janik, a professor and president of Farmingdale State College's UUP chapter, which has about 1,100 members.

Full contract details have yet to be released.

Cuomo said the contract

"fairly compensates SUNY university employees" and is a "significant step forward for all of New York's public universities."

The agreement comes as the 64-campus system heads into its second year implementing Cuomo's Excelsior scholarship, which provides tuition dollars for eligible in-state, middle-class students.

SUNY could not immedi-

ately provide the budgetary impact of the retroactive contract, spokeswoman Holly Liapis said. "SUNY is carefully reviewing the agreement."

The paid family leave provision makes UUP the first public-sector union in the state to have the policy included in a new contract, according to the union.

Beginning in 2019, the contract also would establish a minimum starting salary for part-time faculty members, known as adjuncts, for each three-credit course they teach at the state-operated campuses.

"This is part of a larger effort that's being made on a national and international level on behalf of adjuncts everywhere," said Douglas Cody, a part-time professor of chemistry who represents adjuncts for UUP's Farmingdale chapter and who participated in the negotiations.

Adjuncts make up more than 70 percent of the faculty at Farmingdale State, he said, adding that they are often paid well below the rate of full-time

faculty, even though many have an equivalent level of education and more field experience. He called the new provision long overdue and "very important."

The six-year term of the contract also provides some stability for the state, campuses and employees, Cody said.

In addition to salary increases, the agreement allows employees to access a yearly grant to help pay for their child's education at SUNY state-operated campuses.

UUP's members must ratify the contract. A vote will be conducted by mail this summer, according to the union.

"We're very pleased that we have a contract and those of us who are privy to the details think that we've done the best we could," said Martha Livingston, a professor who served on the negotiations committee and is president of the union's Old Westbury chapter, which has more than 500 members. "Did it give us everything that we wanted? Of course not, but it's fair, and it's reasonable."

The Navy stops by, and Llers get a fleeting look

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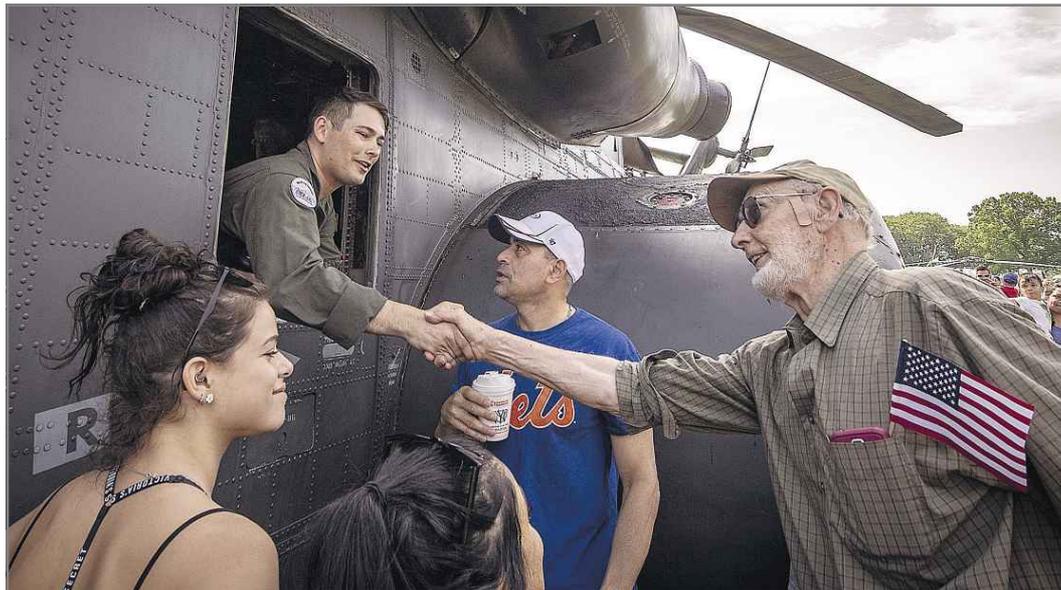
Members of the U.S. Navy air-lifted into Eisenhower Park on Saturday, bringing the annual Fleet Week festivities to those who couldn't make it to New York Harbor.

"It's to bring the Navy to the people, and kind of talk about our life, why we joined, all the cool stuff we get to do, and then just to have an awesome sense of community with people in the tristate area," said Justin Vitalis, 32, a Navy lieutenant and helicopter representative, Carrier Air Wing Three.

The weeklong series of parties and exhibitions kicked off Wednesday with a parade of ships and the arrival of more than 2,300 sailors, Marines and Coast Guardsmen in the Manhattan harbor.

The East Meadow park event was expected to draw more than 3,000 people by day's end, said David Todd, Navy Region Mid-Atlantic public affairs specialist.

It began with service members descending by rope from a



Gerhard Osterhof, of Baldwin Harbor, thanks Naval Aircrewman Tristan Westzenkamp, in an MH3 Echo helicopter, for his service while others watch at Eisenhower Park in East Meadow on Saturday.

helicopter before landing the aircrafts — a Sea Stallion and two Seahawks — in the park.

Alise Sullivan, 60, of Levittown, read about Fleet Week in the newspaper and decided to

take her grandsons, Lex Moncada, 8, and Gavin Pizzo, 5, brothers from Queens, who even dyed their hair red and blue.

"I think it's really exciting because we get to see what hap-

pens, like how the helicopters land and we can see what it looks like inside," said Lex, who hopes to be a pilot when he grows up.

Justin Vujeva, 6, of Hunting-

ton, was especially excited to be so close to the aircrafts. "It's just a once in a life moment," he said.

But the reason for the occasion wasn't lost on him. It's important on Memorial Day weekend to support "the Army men that passed away," he said.

Rocco Panichi, 74, of Massapequa, attends the Eisenhower Park aviation festivities every year.

"It's a very dangerous world, and turning against the people that defend you is wrong," said Panichi, an Army veteran whose 27-year service included being drafted for Vietnam and serving in the Gulf War. "If you love your country, show it. You don't have to praise them, but just cheer them on every once in a while."

The cheers Saturday went a long way for Vitalis.

"It's great," he said, pausing to sign an autograph for one boy. "It makes me feel patriotic. It makes me feel humble that all these people want to come out and take a look at what we do for a living. I'm just really, really grateful."