



Union workers accept Ingalls Shipbuilding's 3-year contract extension

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By **April M. Havens, The Mississippi Press**



Ingalls employees leave the company gym on Singing River Island after placing their votes on a union contract extension Thursday. (KAIJA WILKINSON/Press-Register)

PASCAGOULA, Mississippi -- **Ingalls Shipbuilding's** union workers voted Thursday to accept the shipyard's offer for a three-year extension to their work contract.

The current contract, negotiated in 2009 when the shipyard was still a division of **Northrop Grumman Corp.**, expires in March.

Under the approved deal, Ingalls will give its union journeyman-level workers two 60-cent raises, one 70-cent raise and a \$1,000 ratification bonus.

The proposal was previously agreed upon by the company and the Pascagoula Metal Trades Council and local chapters of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, International Association of Machinists, United Federation of Special Police & Security Officers and Office and Professional Employees International Union.

"This collaboration between management and labor is another example of how we continue to work together to ensure we provide the best opportunities for our shipbuilders and at the same time position our shipyards to compete for future contracts," said Edmond Hughes, vice president of human resources and administration for Ingalls.

The unions represent about 6,000 of the shipyard's 10,300 employees.

Pascagoula Metal Trades Council President Mike Crawley, who represents the largest union, said his workers approved the extension with 60 percent of the vote.

"Ingalls Shipbuilding and the PMTC, IBEW, IAM, OPEIU and UFSPSO unions are pleased that our proposal for a three-year contract extension has been ratified by our shipbuilders," union leaders said in a joint

statement released Thursday night.

Under the agreement, the two 60-cent raises will come on Jan. 9 and March 11, 2013, and the 70-cent raise will come March 10, 2014.

As in previous contracts, workers with classifications below journeyman level will receive proportionate raises.

Qualified employees who are on the active payroll through Dec. 23 will also receive a \$1,000 ratification bonus.

The bonus, to be made in a separate check on Dec. 16, is in lieu of a 2012 cost-of-living adjustment, although cost-of-living adjustments may be possible in following years.

Helena resident Scott Randle, a nearly 22-year employee, said Thursday that he voted in favor of the extension.

"Altogether, I'll be getting an extra \$60 per month," the painter said. "I think that's very fair. We've gotten a lot less in the past."

The \$1,000 bonus, which Randle said will be reduced to about \$630 after taxes, will be used to put the finishing touches on his hot tub.

"I got the hot tub and the deck around it, but I ran out of money," he said, laughing. "I'm going to use this bonus to close it in."

Under the agreement, health care premiums will increase to \$221, \$248 and \$278 on March 12, 2012; March 11, 2013; and March 10, 2014, respectively.

Retiree premiums will increase to \$281, \$370 and \$400 on March 12, 2012; March 11, 2013; and March 10, 2014, respectively. Rates will be locked in for five years for retirees.

Electrician Lloyd Holloway, of Pensacola, said his opinion of the extension deal is "somewhere between the yes and no."

The 18-year employee "voted his conscience" but wouldn't say which way he went Thursday afternoon.

"In the long term we lose because insurance and everything is going up," he said. "But I know everybody's trying to raise a family."

Holloway said he expected voters to pass the extension.

"I would definitely be shocked if it didn't pass based on what everybody has said in the yard," he said after

voting. "People know it's the holidays and Christmas."

Gautier resident Greg Smolcich, a tool room mechanic who has been working for the company for 26 years, said the deal is a fair one.

"It's not exactly what we want, but it's never going to be what we would like," he said. "I would like more, but I will continue to have a job, and that is a blessing."

Smolcich said he understands that times are tough on the Gulf Coast, and with theses raises and bonus "we can keep our heads above water."

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