



**NEWS FROM**

# **Teamsters Local 727**

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## **Chicago Zoological Society Continues to Undervalue its Workforce in the Wake of a Potential Unfair Labor Practice Strike Authorization Vote**

(CHICAGO)— For the last two years, approximately 175 animal care specialists, groundkeepers, technicians, painters, craftworkers, welders, custodians, patrol officers, and mechanics represented by Teamsters Local 727 working at the Brookfield Zoo have gone without a raise. During the COVID-19 pandemic, these hardworking front-line Teamsters workers willingly and selflessly took a pay freeze to their hourly rates. After months of negotiations, the Chicago Zoological Society who manages the Brookfield Zoo (the Zoo) has continued to offer substandard wage increases with some groups receiving higher increases than others. With the current extension agreement set to expire June 15th and only one scheduled day of negotiations left, the Chicago Zoological Society may be just weeks away from an unfair labor practice (ULP) strike.

The Chicago Zoological Society has admitted to receiving over 6 million dollars in PPP funding during the pandemic and reported on its an increase of over 7 million dollars in net assets on its IRS Form 990 from 2019-2020. Despite receiving this funding and increasing its assets, CZS furloughed 59 Teamsters workers, and those who were still working received no increases to their hourly rates. When Teamsters Local 727 sent an information request to CZS about their PPP loan application, including if they included all bargaining Union members on the application, CZS's VP of Human Resources stated in no uncertain terms the Zoo was "not disclosing that information" to the Union. Two years later, after a wage freeze and during a period of sky high inflation, Brookfield Zoo's management is offering minimal wage increases and refusing to recognize Juneteenth as a contractual holiday, despite honoring it as a holiday for the last two years.

To add insult to injury, throughout negotiations, CZS has engaged in unlawful behavior, including removing information from Union bulletin boards required by the Collective Bargaining Agreement and in retaliation of employee's protected concerted activity. After employees through their collective bargaining representative exercised their legal right to inform the public of CSZ's mistreatment of its Union workers with a handbill, management retaliated by removing a Union bulletin board and everything on it. This

type of bad faith bargaining will not be tolerated, and the Union will exercise every legal action at their disposal to protect its members rights. An Unfair Labor Practice Charge is currently pending with Region 13 of the National Labor Relations Board.

The next bargaining date with the Chicago Zoological Society is set for tomorrow, June 7th. On June 8th, the Union will hold a vote for the membership - whether that is a contract ratification vote on a tentative agreement or an unfair labor practice strike vote will be determined by the actions of CZS in Tuesday's negotiations. It is up to the Company to respond to the members' reasonable demands, which have been clearly communicated via the Union's contract proposals. Together, the animal care specialists, groundskeepers, technicians, painters, craftworkers, welders, custodians, patrol officers, and mechanics demand to be treated fairly and with respect.

Teamsters Local 727 represents nearly 10,000 hardworking men and women throughout the Chicago area.

Founded in 1903, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters represents 1.4 million hardworking men and women throughout the U.S., Canada and Puerto Rico.

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Nothing in this article should be read as the union's waiver of any legal argument, position or grievance(s), or as a waiver of any rights, arguments, or defenses under any contract, collective bargaining agreement, or applicable law. The union does not forfeit its right to make any and all supplemental arguments.