

National Grid Union Workers OK Contract, Ending Lockout

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Hugh F. Murray, III

National Grid union workers have voted overwhelmingly to approve a new contract, ending a six-month lockout that left 1,250 gas workers and support staff out of work. Serving approximately 700,000 gas customers in 85 Massachusetts communities, they are scheduled to return to work the week of January 20.

The new contract includes compromises for both parties, including a retirement plan that incorporates a company contribution and a company-matched 401(k) plan rather than a pension for new hires. The contract also preserves retiree health benefits, life insurance, and 26 weeks of sick time, all of which the company had tried to eliminate or reduce. Current workers will maintain their health insurance plan with no deductibles or co-insurance for two years, but costs are subject to rise in 2021.

McCarter partner Hugh Murray asserted that the new contract is not a complete victory for either side, but that both the union and the company got some of what they wanted, specifically regarding the key issues of health insurance and pensions.

Hugh added, "For most employees, this ship has sailed, and these guys were trying to hang on, and it looks like they hung on to some of it for a while."