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Daniel Boone Library Workers Ratify First Ever Contract for Library Employees In Missouri
DBRL board votes to accept the tentative agreement after member pushback and public outcry.

Columbia – Last night, the DBRL board voted to approve a collective bargaining agreement negotiated with the Daniel Boone Library Workers United (DBRLWU), ending a long negotiation process and ratifying the first ever contract for library workers in the state. The board’s approval follows a tumultuous week in which DBRLWU members voted unanimously to approve the contract last Tuesday but later in the week the board rejected it and sent back a new proposal, despite a tentative agreement being negotiated at the bargaining table.

The three-year agreement comes over a year and a half after the library workers voted overwhelmingly to unionize with AFSCME Council 61 back in May of 2022. Since then, DBRLWU members fought hard to ensure that their first contract secured meaningful victories that made real improvements in their lives – and their hard work paid off.

“This is a huge moment for us,” said Wendy Rigby, president of DBRLWU – AFSCME Local 3311. “It’s been a long negotiation process and it was tough, but this contract shows that all the organizing and activism that went into this fight was worth it. This is a transformative first contract.”

In bargaining Sunday night, DBRLWU members rejected the board’s new proposal of a wage reopener and demanded the board take a revote on the TA negotiated at the table. DBRLWU also had the support of countless community members who spoke up and told the board to stop delaying the contract further. “Today’s vote happened because everyone in the community – not just DBRLWU members – made their voices heard.” Rigby said. “That’s the power of solidarity in action!”

This historic agreement will dramatically improve the lives of DBRLWU members, starting with an average raise of 16% right away and an average of 27% in raises across the life of the contract. Other highlights of the contract include the creation of a wage scale that acknowledges an individual’s accrued years of service, reduced health insurance costs for most members, improved retirement benefits, and 12 weeks of paid family leave – up from zero weeks. Additionally, the contract would create a number of on-the-job protections, such as protections against extreme heat and weather, and further institutionalize DBRLWU member’s voice in the workplace with the creation of a health and safety committee and a labor management committee.

“I think this shows the power of collective action,” said Tori Patrick, a DBRLWU executive board member and Lead Library Assistant. “Last year we came together in a union and now we are seeing that all come to fruition. It was a difficult process, but we won all of this because we came together as workers and had each other’s backs.”

This contract sets the stage for cultural organizing in the state of Missouri. DBRLWU members hope that this can inspire other library workers and other cultural employees across the state and prove that change in their workplace is possible when workers come together.

“I want this to be an example for library workers across the state,” Tori said. “If we come together and fight for what you and the community deserve, we can win!”