

Society of Professionals, Scientists, and Engineers

Local 11 – University Professional and
Technical Employees (UPTE),
Communications Workers of America (CWA)
Local 9119, AFL–CIO

SPSE



For Immediate Release: Wednesday, September 26, 2007

For further information contact:

Jim Wolford: (925) 422-7236
Sue Byars: (925) 422-5569
Jeff Colvin: (510) 422-3273

Brion Leri: (209) 914-7025
Jan Gilbrecht: (925) 980-2820

Public Employment Relations Board Certifies Livermore Lab Skilled Trades Unit

Today California’s Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) certified that skilled trades employees at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL) have collective bargaining status with Local 11 of the University Professional and Technical Employees union, also known as the Society of Professionals, Scientists, and Engineers, or SPSE-UPTE, whose entire membership works at the UC-run laboratory.

SPSE-UPTE president Jim Wolford remarked “this is a clear signal from employees that they want to hold on to those things that have made LLNL a premier employer for 55 years.” The move comes just days before the laboratory will undergo a change in management from UC to a consortium led by Bechtel Corporation, known as Lawrence Livermore National Security, LLC. UC will remain a major partner in the private-sector company.

The new company will face obstacles from its very first days in charge. Budget shortfalls in the coming fiscal year have prompted the US Department of Energy to request that LLNL draw up a restructuring plan that is expected to include layoffs. According to Wolford, the union hopes that collective bargaining will effectively prevent layoffs for the new represented unit of employees, or at least make layoffs a last resort. “SPSE-UPTE formed in 1973 in response to several rounds of layoffs that followed the end of the Vietnam War” Union president-elect Sue Byars added, “so it is especially fitting that our first collective bargaining unit would form in time to face another layoff challenge.”

LLNL’s skilled trades employees include air conditioning mechanics, boiler and pressure systems workers, carpenters, electricians, heavy equipment mechanics, locksmiths, maintenance mechanics, painters, plumbers/fitters, riggers, sheet metal workers, trades helpers and welders. The bargaining unit encompasses those workers who work directly for UC. Brion Leri, a lead air conditioning mechanic, was elated. “I feel we will all benefit from this recognition—both workers *and* management.”

UPTE is local 9119 of the Communication Workers of America, AFL-CIO. PERB’s decision was a victory for the union during a difficult time. SPSE-UPTE’s campaign for collective bargaining has faced a combination of challenges including a workforce unaccustomed to having to fight for favorable employment conditions, an October 1st deadline for LLNL to become privatized, and an aggressive counter-campaign by management. Wolford calls this move by the PERB a milestone in employees’ year-long fight for union recognition. The PERB certification notice gives UC ten days to file an appeal.

30 - 30 - 30 - 30 - 30