

Sheriff's union imposed contract includes pay, benefit cuts

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Riverside County declared an impasse last week with the Riverside Sheriff's Association and will impose contract terms on the union starting June 2.

The sheriff's association has called the impasse improper and has threatened legal action against the county over the issue. The terms of the one-year deal include a 10 percent reduction in overall compensation and a new tier of lower pension benefits for newly hired employees, something the sheriff's association contends is illegal.

Here's the breakdown of the key terms the county will impose on the sheriff's association and the 3,000 deputies it represents.

- 2.5 percent reduction in salary
- 2.5 percent reduction in flex benefits, which is an account used to pay for health care such as vision and dental. The 2.5 percent flex reduction is equal the average for deputies and some might still have enough in their accounts to pay cover monthly expenses, according to county officials.
- 5 percent from increased employee retirement contributions. Currently, deputies pay 9 percent of their salary toward their retirement for the first three years of employment. After that, the county picks up both the employee and employer share of the pension contributions. Under the imposed contract terms, deputies would pay toward their retirement, even if they have worked beyond three years.
- No step or merit pay increases.
- A tier of lower pension benefits for new workers. Under the imposed terms, newly hired deputies would be eligible for 2 percent of their pay for each year of service and be able to retire at age 55. The current formula is 3 percent at age 50.

Overall, the county says the imposed contract will save about \$28 million. That figure includes an estimated \$3 million from 300 new hires under the second-tier pension formula.

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