

For Immediate Release

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New Contract with Decorators Union Continues to Increase Flexibility, Reduce Costs for McCormick Place Exhibitors

Five-year contract expands and solidifies labor reforms

CHICAGO (August 22, 2006)— The Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority (MPEA), trade show contractors and the union representing workers who help set up McCormick Place trade show booths today announced a new, five-year collective bargaining agreement, including work-rule changes that will mean more flexibility and reduced costs for both exhibitors and show management.

The agreement between McCormick Place contractors and “United Steelworkers Local 17 Decorators Union” is another step forward for Chicago in ensuring that the city continues its leadership as a premier convention and trade show destination.

“Chicago’s reputation as the world’s premier convention destination is rooted in the city’s skilled workforce,” said Theodore Tetzlaff, Chairman of the MPEA. “I commend the Decorators for doing their part as we continue to grow an industry that’s so important to the city and state economy.”

The agreement with the Decorators comes on the heels of a similar agreement in May with the Riggers Union Local 136. Both are considered landmark agreements in the history of labor-management relations at McCormick Place.

The Decorators Union is responsible for hanging signs and installing drape, cloth and/or tacked fabric panels.

“This contract sends a very powerful message to show organizers and exhibitors that Chicago is committed to making the trade show experience here better than ever,” said Leticia Peralta Davis, Chief Executive Officer of the MPEA. “These negotiations were conducted with the best interests of our customers in mind. The MPEA commends the Decorators Union for its openness to work rule changes, its spirit of cooperation and its commitment to excellence. This agreement will bring further flexibility and cost reductions to McCormick Place show operations.”

Davis said the new contract grew out of labor reforms announced in May 2005. In particular, she cited establishment of a new Labor Management Council as a key step in ensuring ongoing dialogue among McCormick Place management, employees, contractors and customers that contributed to the agreement announced today.

Tony DeGrado, President of Local 17 Decorators Union said, “Our agreement to an unprecedented five-year contract will help the exhibition industry in Chicago. My members take pride in the quality of their work and believe this agreement will draw even more business and jobs to the conventions, trade shows and hotel facilities throughout Illinois. This contract protects the seniority rights of our members and gives them job security and a decent standard of living.”

The five-year contract with the Decorators retroactively takes effect July 1, 2006 and expires June 30, 2011. Among the key features of the new contract:

Reduced overtime charges: The new contract establishes two start times for crews Monday through Friday, with the first eight hours at straight time. The new weekday start times are 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. This allows exhibitors greater flexibility in decorating their booths without incurring overtime charges. Time worked on Saturday will be at time and a half rather than double time for the first eight hours. Additionally, the first four hours following the break of a show will be billed at straight time.

Clearly defined language on reduced crew sizes: The new agreement establishes and clearly defines jobs requiring two-person crews and those requiring three-person crews.

Drug Testing: The Decorators Union will adopt an addendum to the current drug policy to include random drug testing at MPEA properties effective January 1, 2007.

Expanded management rights: Employers are granted expanded authority to direct the work force in the performance of work, assignment of workers, movement of employees between MPEA buildings and in disciplinary matters.

Wages/Benefits: The Decorators and contractors agreed to increased wages and benefits over the term of the contract.

The contract was signed by the Decorators Union and the two major general show contractors, GES Exposition Services and Freeman.

Governor Blagojevich and Mayor Daley have been instrumental in providing support for labor reforms that will keep McCormick Place and Chicago at the forefront of the convention and trade show industry.

"Chicago is committed to providing value to all customers and this latest labor agreement is proof positive," said Tim Roby, President of the Chicago Convention and Tourism Bureau.

Peter Eelman, Vice-President of Exhibitions for the International Manufacturing Technology Show, said the agreement is a welcome demonstration of the commitment by all parties to ongoing operational reforms.

"It looks like McCormick Place is on a roll. In the space of just a few months, we've seen the retention or attraction of major shows and significant labor reforms such as those announced today."

"We are thrilled by this most welcome news, which means that exhibitors will save money, show managers will have an improved show experience, and that set-up and tear-down will be more efficient than ever," said Eelma.

Today's announcement was attended by a variety of business, civic, labor, hospitality industry leaders and McCormick Place customer representatives.