

County court workers form union, nix SEIU

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Nearly 300 court-related and court-appointed Westmoreland County employees overwhelmingly voted to leave their long-time bargaining unit and form a new labor union.

The workers, who include deputy sheriffs, court staff and office workers in many court-related departments at the courthouse, will form an independent organization called the Westmoreland County Court-Related Employees Association.

Workers voted Thursday to withdraw from the Service Employees International Union Local 668, which represented them during the last round of labor talks over the previous two years.

Of the 243 votes cast, 196 workers chose to form the new union. Forty-five employees opted to remain with the SEIU. Two wanted to have no representation.

Sam Ickes, a representation coordinator with the Pennsylvania Labor Relations Board, said the new union will be certified in five days if no objections to the vote are filed.

"What's next is that we negotiate a new contract," said Jackie Lucchetti, an office worker for Greensburg District Judge James Albert who helped to organize the move to change unions.

Chuck Dominick, the county's human resources director, said he has not received official notification from the state about the certification vote and could not comment about the status of negotiations.

The court workers, prohibited by law from striking, have worked without a contract since 2006.

An arbitrator's ruling for a new contract, which called for raises, was put on hold and could be nullified as a result of the shift away from the SEIU.

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