

February 13, 2009

San Luis Obispo City Council
990 Palm St.
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

RE: Arbitration as a Fair, Impartial Resolve to Collective Bargaining Impasses

Dear Mayor and Council Members,

We are writing to express our strong support for San Luis Obispo's existing dispute resolution process, which provides for the use of an impartial arbitration procedure as a fair and peaceful method to resolving collective bargaining impasses between the City and the City's public safety employee unions, while at the same time protecting the rights and safety of the public. Assuredly, arbitration has effectively protected the safety of San Luis Obispo's citizens for nearly a decade by prohibiting local firefighters and law enforcement officers from striking and instead, encouraging all parties to be more realistic and honest in their demands at the bargaining table.

San Luis Obispo is not alone. More than two-dozen states currently provide arbitration as a means of fairly resolving public employee collective bargaining disputes. In fact, voters in over 20 local agencies statewide have approved arbitration as an appropriate delegation of legislative authority to assure that fair negotiations take place and it's a process that is initiated only when an impasse has been declared and where all mutual efforts to reach a collective bargaining agreement have failed.

We have always been proud to support processes that allow labor unions to have an equitable bargaining resolution because it provides rank-and-file, as well as management a fair shot at having their issues heard in an environment that is free of politics and posturing. Furthermore, binding arbitration ensures that firefighters and police officers provide uninterrupted protection to our citizens, remaining focused on their sworn duty-protecting the public, rather than become distracted by unnecessary and unproductive protracted labor disputes.

For these reasons, we strongly and respectfully urge the Council to reject any proposal(s) that would rescind the City's voter-approved arbitration process for firefighters and law enforcement officers.

Respectfully,