

The Chief

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Uniformed Status Of EMTs, FADs Upheld by Judge

Enhances Bargaining Rights of Unions Involved

By GINGER OTIS ADAMS

An attempt by Mayor Michael Bloomberg to alter local laws affecting the collective bargaining power of Emergency Medical Technicians and Fire Alarm Dispatchers has fallen short of the mark.

A State Supreme Court Justice in Manhattan ruled Jan. 12 that earlier laws enacted by the City Council granted the most appropriate collective-bargaining representation to EMTs and FADs. The judge, Doris Ling-Cohan, dismissed Mayor Bloomberg's argument that the City Charter—which classifies EMTs and FADs as civilian city employees—had been violated by the Council.

'We Deserve This'

David Rosenzweig, head of the Fire Alarm Dispatchers Benevolent Association, called the ruling a triumph for his workers. "I've been waiting more than 35 years for this decision and for the city to acknowledge that these are career professionals worthy and deserving of uniformed status. They've been deserving for many, many years and finally they are able to achieve it."

Unless the ruling is overturned by a possible city appeal, the laws enacted by the Council over the veto of then-Mayor Rudy Giuliani would allow EMTs and FADs to bargain outside of the city-wide pool, similar to the way firefighters and cops do. They will no longer be forced to accept overtime, vacation pay and holiday policies that apply to city employees who operate on a totally different pay scale and time clock.

The lawsuit also touched

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EMT, FAD Win

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upon an age-old question in city politics: which wields more power, the executive branch or the legislative branch? In this instance, at least, the legislative branch won out.

At the request of the affected unions, Council Members had first introduced legislation granting EMTs and FADs the same collective bargaining rights as other uniformed personnel on the basis that EMTs and FADs work under the same shift structure, with mandated overtime and 24-hour work schedules. They argued that it didn't make sense for those employees to be considered in citywide bargaining sessions that primarily dealt with nine-to-five administrative personnel.

Mayor Bloomberg inherited the new laws when he came into office and union leaders had hoped he would not challenge them. Mr. Rosenzweig said last week, however, that he was glad the lawsuit ran its course.

He insisted that money was never the primary issue. "This ruling has a lot to do with getting respect from uniformed personnel for 'classified civilian employees,'" he said proudly.



DAVID ROSENZWEIG:
'Now we'll get respect.'