

Spirit And Union Resume Negotiations

WICHITA, Kan. (AP) — Negotiations have resumed between Spirit AeroSystems and the union representing its engineering and technical workers.

Talks started earlier this summer, but stopped in July after members of the Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace members rejected the company's 9 1/2-year contract offer. They did not vote on a strike authorization.

On Thursday, both sides returned to the negotiating table. Both plan to offer their own contract proposals.

SPEEA, which represents 2,300 workers at the Wichita plant, said it expects the Spirit AeroSystems to answer a union counterproposal offered after union members rejected the company's offer.

"We are going back to the negotiations table to get the fair and equitable resolution that our members deserve and the company desires," Bill Hartig, chairman of SPEEA's Wichita Technical and Professional Unit negotiation team, said in a news release.

The Wichita Eagle (<http://bit.ly/ppT6dm>) reports that a company official told employees in a memo distributed Thursday that "it is time for the company to break the silence and set the record straight" on negotiations.

Adam Pogue, Spirit's vice president of labor and work force, wrote in that memo that Spirit has approached negotiations as a partnership.

"SPEEA leadership has chosen to take a different approach toward these negotiations. An approach focused on damaging the health of our company in the eyes of our investors, our suppliers, and our customers," Pogue said.

He wrote that Spirit plans to offer a proposal that ensures stability for the company and its customers, provides health care options that meet employee needs, and accounts for market realities. The proposal would offer compensation that aligns with market and business performance.

"We intend to present a proposal that remains consistent with our company wide approach, but that is focused on addressing what we heard from our people as key areas to revisit," Pogue wrote. "The company is committed to reaching an agreement that is in the best interests of our employees and our company. We hope SPEEA is as well."

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