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San Joaquin County sheriff's deputies hold protest over contract

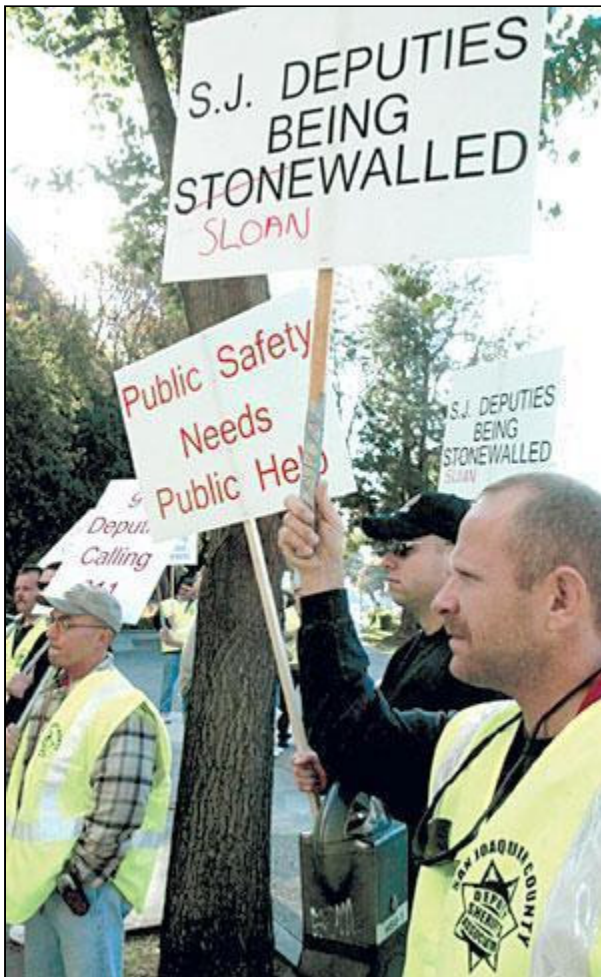
By [Les Mahler](#)

San Joaquin News Service

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San Joaquin County deputy sheriffs took their contract dispute with the county to the streets and board of supervisors' court Tuesday.

More than 40 sheriff deputies held an informational picket outside the courthouse in Stockton on Tuesday to highlight their displeasure that contract talks with the county are now going on three years.



At the supervisors' meeting, six deputies sat quietly with signs that read "Deputies steamrolled," "Public safety needs public help," and "calling 911."

In the meantime, the county has posted its position on its Web site.

Steve Walker, president of the sheriff deputies association, said the dispute has dragged on because the county is demanding takeaways that the deputies won't approve.

Among those takeaways are the right to binding arbitration and the right to be paid for sick leave without being asked for a doctor's note, he said.

He called the requirement of a doctor's note for sick leave punishment on the county's part.

"Their proposal does nothing to prevent sick leave abuse," Walker said.

But Wayne Heine, the county's director of labor relations said the county provides the sick leave and it has the right to ask an employee to substantiate that illness.

"We're not requesting a doctor's note every time they get sick," Heine said.

"We're asking for one every time that there's a work action and about their illness."

San Joaquin County sheriff's deputies upset over the lack of progress in obtaining a new contract picket outside the Stockton Courthouse on Tuesday. ([Angelina Gervasi/News-Sentinel](#))

County Administrator Manuel Lopez said that last year deputies during Service Employees International Union Local 790 strike

"Sheriff deputies aren't allowed to strike," he said. "So when the sick and the sheriff noticed that so many were ill than any other given day, he requested proof that they were sick."

Because many of them couldn't provide proof of their illness, the deputies weren't paid for that day, Lopez said.

Besides the sick leave, Walker said the other sticking point in talks is the right of deputies to seek arbitration over discipli

Walker said the county could easily implement SB440, which was passed in January and requires binding arbitration in disputes.

But Heine said SB440 is still being discussed in court and eventually could be struck down.

"Besides, it's not part of the negotiations at this time because we haven't reached an impasse," Heine said.

Walker said the county wants to get rid of binding arbitration and that's why it won't include SB440 in their talks with d

Supervisor Leroy Ornellas said the two sides are not that far apart.

"I get the sense we're pretty close and that we're off on only a couple of issues," he said.

He also questioned if the association's full membership had a chance to see what the county has offered.

"It's a pretty good contract," Ornellas said.

What the county is offering is a 9.5 percent increase in pay once a contract is signed, Heine's letter to the deputies said. . county is offering a 2 percent to 4 percent increase on July 1, 2005, based on the consumer price index at that time.

The county also is offering to resolve the health care benefits issue, cap holiday accumulation at 60 hours and update the discrimination.




The county wants deputies to approve the same health care package other unions in the county have taken, Heine said.

Under that proposal, employees would have to pay from \$5 to \$15 for prescriptions if they use the county's medical plan. visits under the county's medical plan, co-pay would be \$5 to \$10 each visit.

If deputies have Kaiser, the cost for prescriptions would be \$5 to \$10 and \$10 for a doctor's visit.

To view the county's proposal to sheriff deputies, go to http://www.co.san-joaquin.ca.us/Labor_Relations.

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