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# LOCAL News



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Posted on Tue, Oct. 13, 2009

## Philadelphia Art Museum guards vote to unionize

By Stephan Salisbury  
Inquirer Culture Writer

AlliedBarton security officers employed at the Philadelphia Museum of Art voted during the weekend to join the independent Philadelphia Security Officers Union.

By a vote of 68-55, the guards agreed to form their first formal collective-bargaining unit at the museum since city employees provided museum security more than 17 years ago. Amid an early-1990s budget crunch, then-Mayor Ed Rendell outsourced the security work to contractors.

The vote was held Friday and Saturday.

"I really love the Art Museum, and most of us do," union supporter and museum guard Bernardo Dickerson said yesterday, after public announcement of the election results.

"This victory will make our jobs worth having. It will make the museum both a better place to work and a better museum."

AlliedBarton, of Conshohocken, supplies security services nationwide and to many major institutions in the region. It employs about 130 guards at the museum, roughly 80 percent of the security force.

The guards are paid \$10.03 an hour. In 1992, when guards were members of a municipal union, they received up to \$14 an hour plus benefits, organizers said.

Lawrence Rubin, an AlliedBarton spokesman, said the company respected its "employees' right to freely choose to be represented by a union."

In an e-mail, Rubin wrote: "We look forward to working with the new union as we continue to provide our security officers with a fair wage and benefits program, and to continue to employ the best-qualified, best-trained security officers to serve visitors at the Philadelphia Museum of Art."

A spokesman for the Art Museum echoed the AlliedBarton comment and said that the museum, which does not directly employ the guards, had maintained a neutral posture during the union drive.

"The museum is not, and has not been, a party to this matter and will not be involved in the next steps," Norman Keyes, the museum spokesman, wrote in an e-mail yesterday. "The next steps are between AlliedBarton, its employees, and the union."

Fabricio Rodriguez, executive director of Jobs With Justice, which has assisted officers in the union effort, said the union campaign took two years before coming to fruition.

"The important thing is that we won," he said yesterday, adding that AlliedBarton and the union must put together a timetable for talks.

Dickerson said bread-and-butter issues were at the top of the list for discussions.

"A livable wage is the number-one issue," he said. "Also, affordable health care. And just the general lack of respect for guards."

Contact culture writer Stephan Salisbury at 215-854-5594 or [ssalisbury@phillynews.com](mailto:ssalisbury@phillynews.com).

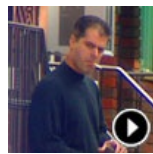
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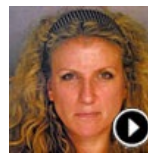
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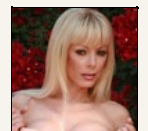
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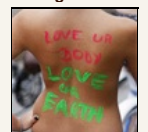
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