

# Culinary Union and MGM Mirage Reach Deal on Contract

Las Vegas (AP) – The union representing thousands of hotel and restaurant workers in Nevada has reached a tentative agreement on a five-year contract with its largest employer, the union and MGM Mirage said.

The deal between the Culinary Workers Union Local 226 and MGM Mirage Inc. was reached late Wednesday after a 10-hour bargaining session, Culinary political director Pilar Weiss said. The deal ended a nearly two-month stalemate. The union had approved a strike authorization vote for next month.

If approved, the contract will cover some 21,000 servers, cooks and housekeepers that work in 10 hotel-casinos.

The two sides reached an impasse in June, in part, over language proposed by the union that would ensure it would be able to organize in future properties in which MGM Mirage had a stake.

MGM Mirage has large joint venture development plans, including its USD 7.4 billion CityCenter project and a plan to develop 40 acres on the north end of the Las Vegas Strip.

Weiss said the union was very pleased with the joint venture language in the tentative agreement but would not describe details.

Union members are scheduled to vote Friday to ratify the agreement.

MGM Mirage issued a statement saying that the contract includes annual wage increases and continued contributions to the union's health and pension funds. Company spokesman Alan Feldman declined to comment further until after the

ratification vote.

The Culinary Workers Union represents 60,000 hotel and casino workers on the Las Vegas Strip and downtown and workers at McCarran International Airport, as well as some laundry facilities in the city.

It reached a deal with its other major employer, Harrah's Entertainment, in June, and on Tuesday ratified a new contract with the Riviera hotel-casino.

Approximately 11,000 union members continue to work under extensions while they negotiate new contracts with smaller casinos on the Strip and downtown.

The contract fight has won national attention thanks to Democratic presidential candidates who are seeking the union's endorsement ahead of Nevada's Jan. 19 caucus. Each major candidate met repeatedly with the union and promised to walk the picket line if the union went on strike.

Former vice presidential nominee John Edwards issued the first statement on the deal Wednesday, less than two hours after it was reached. Edwards called the Culinary, „leaders for the Vegas Dream in which hospitality and service sector workers can be part of the middle class.“

A statement from Illinois Sen. Barack Obama's campaign called the deal „an important sign of progress.“ New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson is scheduled to attend a meeting at the union hall Thursday.