



NEWS RELEASE

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FMCS Statement on Tentative Agreement Between the ILWU and Pacific Northwest Grain Handlers

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Scot L. Beckenbaugh, Acting Director of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS), issued the following statement today on a tentative agreement reached just prior to midnight (PST) last evening between the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) and Pacific Northwest Grain Companies.

“After engaging in difficult and contentious bargaining for over two years, including multiple marathon mediation sessions held under the auspices of the FMCS, the announcement of the tentative agreement, subject to the ratification of ILWU membership, represents an amazing achievement of a potentially positive outcome in a labor dispute that has gained national attention.

“The ILWU, with its recommendation, will submit the tentative agreement to its members for ratification.

“The FMCS commends both labor and management representatives for their successful negotiation and for their commitment and dedication to the process of collective bargaining. Clearly the parties maintained strongly held competing views on the many issues that divided them during this process. In the end they found a way, in the time-honored tradition of the collective bargaining process, to reach mutually agreeable solutions that will allow the employees and the employers to move forward in their relationship. Equally important to our nation, is the knowledge that this tentative agreement, subject to the approval of affected ILWU membership, represents the opportunity to ensure that grain exports important to the U.S. economy and the world will proceed without disruption for years to come.

“These were difficult and contentious negotiations to be certain. I am grateful for the professionalism and cooperation the parties exhibited in mediation process during which they were able to reach what they believe will be acceptable and mutually beneficial solutions to the issues which have separated them for so long. I especially commend the leadership demonstrated by the representatives of ILWU and the representatives of the Grain Handlers. Though fierce in their representation of their respective positions, they never lost sight of their responsibility to reach a mutually acceptable solution.

“On a personal note, I want to commend the extraordinary efforts of FMCS Director of Mediation Services, Beth Schindler and FMCS Commissioner Gary Hattal who provided mediation assistance to the parties during some of the most difficult times in the negotiations process.”

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Out of respect for the ratification process and consistent with the Agency's longstanding policy on confidentiality, FMCS will neither comment on nor disclose the terms of the agreement.

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The Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, created in 1947, is an independent U.S. government agency whose mission is to preserve and promote labor-management peace and cooperation. Headquartered in Washington, DC, with 10 district offices and 67 field offices, the agency provides mediation and conflict resolution services to industry, government agencies and communities.