

# The Chief

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## Chosen Over OSA: HHC's HMO Staff Votes for DC37

by MEREDITH KOLODNER

Workers at MetroPlus, the Health and Hospitals Corporation's health maintenance organization, have voted overwhelmingly to join District Council 37, choosing it over the Organization of Staff Analysts.



**EDDIE RODRIGUEZ:**  
Adds 300 members.

The more-than 300 sales representatives will be represented by Clerical-Administrative Local 1549 of DC 37. After a two-year campaign, workers picked DC 37 over OSA by a vote of 149 to 64.

### 'A Team Effort'

"This was really a team effort," said Eddie Rodriguez, president of Local 1549. "Everyone pulled together, other leaders at

DC 37 were involved, AFSCME [DC 37's parent union] sent organizers. They knew we had a good contract and we could get them one too."

The MetroPlus workers, who handle enrollment applications for people who use the HMO of the city's hospital system, make an average of approximately \$30,000 per year and had been without union representation since the program began in the early 1990s. Mr. Rodriguez said that DC 37's prescription plan, job security, and its record of servicing members helped to convince the workers to join.

"This organizing drive was very important to us," said DC 37 Executive Director Lillian Roberts.

The victory was a step into the private sector for the mostly public-sector union, since MetroPlus workers are employed by a private company.

### 15-Year Push by OSA

OSA began organizing at MetroPlus in 1992. Several hundred MetroPlus workers became members of OSA, Local 1180 of the Communication Workers of America and DC 37 after the unions worked out a deal to divide the workers by job category. The unions agreed to allow about 300 workers to remain non-union for at least three years because HHC said that it was not sure how long the division that employed them would last.

In 2000 OSA went back and began the process of trying to unionize those 300 workers. About two years ago, just before OSA filed for an election, DC 37 intervened and sought permission from the Office of Collective Bargaining (OCB) to represent the workers. OCB ruled that both unions should be allowed to take part in the election.

### Wanted 'Real' Union

"The other side did an excellent job of organizing," said Bob Croghan, OSA's president. "We did a pretty good job, but they did a better job. They had a lot of outside help."

Mr. Rodriguez said the size and power of DC 37 was a factor in the election.

"They knew they had AFSCME behind them," he said. "They wanted a real union. OSA is not a union, it's an organization."

Local 1549 represents about 18,000 of DC 37's 121,000 members. OSA has about 4,650 members.

Mr. Rodriguez says the union plans to continue organizing new members. "This is only the beginning," he said.