

What did this new law do to my current contract?

Nothing! Our current contract holds good through its expiration on June 30, 2017. If your offer letter also promises certain benefits, then that might be enforceable: that will depend on the wording. You should definitely check out your offer letter!

What did this new law do to bargaining?

It limits the scope of bargaining. Under the old system, the employer had to bargain over benefits like health insurance, paid and sick leave, hours of work, grievance procedures, and ‘supplemental pay’ (which includes our tuition and fees coverage). Under the new law, bargaining over benefits like our GradCare, our 100% tuition coverage, and our 25% fees coverage is illegal. And bargaining over some benefits, like grievance procedures, paid and sick leave, and hours of work permissive: that means if the employer refuses to talk about them, we cannot bargain over them.

Can the Regents and the University still offer us these benefits?

Yes! Absent a change in state law, the Regents and University can and should offer our benefits at least at the current level. But their actions give every indication that they intend to seize the power to cut our benefits. They refused to ratify their own contract offer which would protect our benefits; they refused to publicly confirm no cuts will occur; and they bargained in bad faith because they waited to bargain under Iowa’s new law that seizes control of our benefits. And this fact pattern leads us to suspect they want to cut our benefits.

Should the Regents and the University offer us these benefits?

Yes. We believe they offered to maintain our benefits in good faith in December. So they think they are reasonable. The university budget can easily afford it. We generate far more money than we cost. And we are critical to the university. So trying to deny us these benefits and refusing to assure us we will keep them is illegal, immoral, and will cost the university money and prestige.

If the Regents and the University offer us our current benefits, why does it matter if they are not in the COGS contract?

Before COGS fought to secure these benefits under the law, graduate workers had to beg for benefits. The Regents and the University seem intent on trying to return us to those days. That is why staying vigilant and organized matters. Under the old law, our contract benefits were reliably guaranteed; under the new law, all it takes is one ill-tempered manager to remove certain provisions of our contract. And we did not have tuition coverage and GradCare before COGS formed. In fact, it took 16 years to get full tuition coverage: the university fought us every step of the way. And after we got tuition coverage, they started hiking our fees!

In short: we cannot naively depend on the beneficence of the administration. Their entire action pattern over the past 20 years indicates they will cut what they can. So we have to be ready to fight. We must stay organized, and stay union-strong!

What can I do?

You can (1) join the union! (2) Participate in our actions! Our calendar of events is on our website, cogs.org, and on our Facebook page.