

AT&T-union negotiations expected down to the wire

April 3 2009

(AP) -- Negotiators for AT&T Inc. and union officials representing 112,500 employees said Friday they expect to bargain into the weekend on five labor contracts that expire Saturday night.

AT&T, the largest employer of union labor in the country, is looking to get the [employees](#) to cover more of their health care costs, among other concessions.

Candice Johnson, a spokeswoman for the Communications [Workers](#) of America, declined to comment on whether union officials are moving any closer to calling a strike. Union workers voted to give their leaders that option last month.

"Right now we're focused on bargaining and trying to get quality contracts," she said.

The negotiations cover landline employees, not workers in the mobile phone unit of Dallas-based AT&T. Six regions are represented in the talks, including one whose contract doesn't expire for several months.

AT&T spokesman Walt Sharp noted that negotiations typically continue until contracts expire and sometimes go beyond.

Sharp said there would be no disruption in phone service if there is a strike, because managers and contractors could take over certain tasks.

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Citation: AT&T-union negotiations expected down to the wire (2009, April 3) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-04-att-union-wire.html>

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