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## Dads get a break in new Bloomingdale's contract

By Adrienne Pasquarelli

Paternity leave is among the benefits that the East 59th Street department store's workers will receive.

For the first time, new dads at Bloomingdale's will be able to take time off to spend with their newborns. As part of a new union contract, workers at the retailer's East 59th Street flagship location will receive paternity leave.

The majority of the contract, negotiated with Local 3 United Storeworkers division of the Retail Wholesale and Department Store union, was ratified Tuesday evening. The new contract will affect the flagship's 2,000 employees. A spokesman for Macy's Inc., which owns Bloomingdale's, noted that though a significant portion of the new contract was approved, there is still some work to do toward full ratification.

"We continue to have discussions with the union in good faith," he said, but declined to disclose specifics.

The new contract also added lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender nondiscrimination language for the first time. A general wage increase over five years, increased health-care options and seniority protection were also included, according to the union.

Michael Weber, a partner at Littler Mendelson, a law firm which specializes in employment law, said some of the contract provisions appear innovative.

"These kinds of terms and conditions are new in the collective bargaining setting—paternity leave in particular," he said. "Bloomingdale's might be on the cutting edge—my guess is they agreed to these terms because it would be an improved working condition for employees."

Representatives from the union were pleased with the contract.

"It will improve the lives of our members for many years to come," said Cassandra Berrocal, president of Local 3. In April, the union and workers rallied in front of Bloomingdale's flagship, and visited the store with labor leaders including New York State AFL-CIO President Mario Cilento and New York City Central Labor Council President Vincent Alvarez to build support for a new contract.