

# Los Angeles and San Diego teachers' contracts set to expire at the end of the month

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Teachers at the two largest school districts in California, Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) and San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD), will have their union contracts expire by the end of the month.

The LAUSD's contract with Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 99, which represents thousands of workers including teacher's aides, custodians and cafeteria workers, is also set to expire this summer.

While the contracts are set to expire at the same time, along with the upcoming expiration of the SEIU contract, there is no attempt by the unions to wage a unified struggle against the wholesale assault on public education. Quite the opposite is taking place; the unions are doing everything in their power to isolate teachers and school workers from one another.

A report from Southern California Public Radio, paints a gloomy picture for teachers as they head towards the deadline, "If recent history is any indication, talks could last months..." In other words, teachers will be expected to work without a contract for that period of time.

Both unions, the San Diego Education Association (SDEA) and the United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA), posture as defenders of teachers and other school workers when in reality they are working tirelessly with the National Education Association, beholden to the Democratic Party, to ensure that union dues continue without any hiccups and cuts enforced without any eruption of opposition outside of their control.

The SDEA's slogan, L.E.A.R.N!, and UTLA's "Schools LA Students Deserve" are revealed as entirely empty when one begins to examine only the most recent behavior of the two unions.

Over the past couple of months, hundreds of

educators and support staff in San Diego faced the uncertainty of whether or not they would be returning to their jobs in the coming school year. In May it was announced that some 1,500 teachers and staff will be laid off due to potential funding cuts announced by the district, with a reported budget deficit of \$124.4 million.

To offset the deficit, the union and the district worked together to convince older workers to take the Supplementary Early Retirement Plan (SERP), or "Golden Handshake," a retirement incentive equal to 100 percent of their final salary spread out over 5 years.

Five hundred and twenty-eight teachers opted for the agreement, "saving" the jobs of 485 teachers. However, the reality is that SERP still ensures a deficit of educators as pink-slipped positions have still been eradicated. There has been no reassurance that there will be a one-for-one rehire for every teacher that accepts early retirement.

In LA, where the most expensive school board election in US history recently took place, with more than \$14 million spent on the election, the candidates favored by the UTLA lost the election.

Their defeat underscores the discrediting of the unions through their collaboration with the Democrats in closing schools and diverting funds to charter schools.

The "Schools LA Students Deserve" campaign by the UTLA is a cover for the union's support for school accountability and parental control, both of which are favored by pro-charter industries.

Under these conditions it is no surprise that membership in the UTLA fell from 45,000 in 2008 to roughly 32,000 in 2016.

Against the backdrop of the two contract expirations

is the claim that there is no money for teachers, reduced class sizes, pensions, benefits, school supplies or new buildings. Both districts are facing multi-million dollar budget deficits. SDUSD is projecting a \$124 million dollar deficit, while LAUSD has a staggering \$13.6 billion unfunded liability for retiree health care benefits.

The SDEA and UTLA are promoting the illusion that Democratic governor Jerry Brown's finalized budget in May will come to the teachers' rescue. Despite these assurances, SDUSD interim president, CFO Patricia Koch, made clear to the board that "even if the May revise restores the entirety of what was lost in January, we are still facing more than \$100 million in reductions in '17-'18. So, the May revise is not the place to look for eliminating our problem. It may help, but we will still need to make reductions."

Brown's proposed budget for the 2017-2018 year is a mere \$1.5 billion increase in general funds, nothing of substance that will help under-funded schools throughout California, the largest state by population in the United States.

On top of this Brown's proposed \$1 billion in one-time funding for K-12 schools has been pushed back. The claim that there is no money for education is ludicrous when the 124 billionaires who call California home claim a total net worth of \$532.4 billion. Between just the two wealthiest men in the state, Mark Zuckerberg (\$44.6B) and Larry Ellison (\$43.6B), there is more than enough money to guarantee every single child the right to a high quality education.



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