

# All-out support for the West Virginia teachers!

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The *World Socialist Web Site* calls for the urgent mobilization of all sections of the working class to support striking West Virginia teachers.

More than 20,000 teachers and other school employees in the state have taken a courageous stand to demand the right to living wages, affordable health benefits and high-quality public education. The statewide walkout, now in its fourth day, is being waged in defiance of reactionary laws banning public employee strikes.

The teachers and school employees are fighting for the whole working class. Their fight has pit them against the entire political establishment, from Governor Jim Justice, a billionaire coal baron, to the Democrats and Republicans in the state legislature who are controlled by the energy, chemical and pharmaceutical corporations.

The state government has given teachers an ultimatum: Either accept an insulting 4 percent wage increase over the next three years, which will be more than eaten up by rising healthcare costs, or the state will fine, fire and even jail teachers if they continue their walkout.

Teachers are determined to fight, but they cannot wage this battle on their own! They confront a ruling class, which controls all levers of political power, and is determined to defend their ill-gotten wealth by impoverishing the working class.

*The WSWS urges teachers to form rank-and-file committees to issue an appeal for coordinated action of all workers. We call on miners, public sector workers, autoworkers and other sections of the working class, students and youth, to form committees and organize meetings to discuss immediate measures to assist teachers and prevent any effort to victimize or fire them.*

A united struggle of the working class cannot be waged within the framework of the trade unions, which are isolating the teachers and preparing to impose a defeat. The teachers' unions in West Virginia have said that they will shut down the strike if the governor and state legislators agree to a face-to-face meeting and issue worthless promises about special sessions or task forces to address the funding crisis sometime in the future.

The same bogus pledges were made to teachers the last time they struck in 1990 and nothing has changed.

The unions are trying to channel opposition behind the Democratic Party. But the Democrats—who have controlled the governor's seat in West Virginia for 32 of the last 40 years—defend the interest of corporate America and Wall Street no less ruthlessly than their Republican counterparts.

The Obama administration, supported by the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association, oversaw a massive assault on teachers and public education while promoting charter schools and other for-profit schemes. This paved the way for the escalation of the attack on public education by Trump and his education secretary Betsy DeVos.

Teachers, you have powerful allies, but they are not the Democrats! It is to the mass of the working class that it is necessary to turn: To teachers and school employees in Pittsburgh, Los Angeles, Florida, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Arizona and other cities and states that are preparing to strike. To graduate students at the University of Illinois that began a strike on Monday. To 40,000 lecturers in England striking for improved pensions and to oppose plans to privatize the public university system. To the 9,300 public school teachers in Nova Scotia, Canada who are threatening to walk out in defiance of the province's anti-strike laws.

It is critical to reach out to the miners, autoworkers, public sector workers, health care workers, service workers and every section of the working class facing the same issues and the same conditions, as well as students and young people.

Independent teachers' committees, neighborhood committees and factory committees in every plant and workplace will create the organizational framework for a powerful offensive, independent of the trade unions and in opposition to the entire social and political system.

Teachers should establish lines of communication using social media and other means to insist that their demands are met, including a 50 percent across-the-board raise and the abolition of all out-of-pocket healthcare costs. Any attempt by the unions to send teachers back to work based on rotten agreements, injunctions or both must be opposed.

Throughout the state, emergency meetings of workers and young people should be called to broaden this fight. The great tradition of the coal miners and other class-conscious workers of "an injury to one, is an injury to all" must be revived, and collective action prepared to answer injunctions and threats to fire and jail teachers like Reagan did to the PATCO air traffic controllers in 1981.

The teachers struggle, above all, is a political fight. If the working class is to assert its social rights and utilize the wealth it produces for the common good, instead of the yachts, mansions and private jets of the super-rich, then workers need to build a powerful political movement of their own. Such a movement, politically independent from both corporate-controlled parties, must fight for a vast redistribution of the wealth, and a reorganization of economic life to meet the needs of the vast majority of the population. The Socialist Equality Party is building that movement, and we urge teachers and other workers to join this fight.



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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