

Teachers must link up their fight with educators nationally and internationally!

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Niles Niemuth is the Socialist Equality Party's candidate for Congress in Michigan's 12th Congressional District. Visit niles2018.com to donate and get involved in the campaign.

Teachers across the US have returned to the classrooms under conditions of an unrelenting assault on public education.

As school opened, teachers defied state law and walked out in districts across Washington state, fighting for adequate school funding in the aftermath of decades of cuts. In Los Angeles, 33,000 teachers have voted nearly unanimously for strike action.

This follows the strikes by educators earlier this year in West Virginia, Oklahoma, Kentucky and Arizona. Teacher strikes have also erupted internationally this year with mass strikes in Mexico, Argentina, Slovenia, Bangladesh, the United Kingdom and India.

As the Socialist Equality Party's candidate for Congress in Michigan's 12 congressional district, I urge teachers to link up with educators across the US and internationally who are standing up against poverty wages, worsening healthcare coverage, escalating class sizes and attacks on special education and other programs. The issue at stake is nothing less than the survival of public education.

Michigan teachers, who spearheaded the national "teacher rebellion" with sickouts and mass protests in 2015, face an urgent situation.

* The Detroit Public Schools Community District (DPSCD) system has shut off drinking water at every one of its 106 school buildings because of elevated levels of lead and copper. How many hundreds of thousands of children have been exposed to toxic poisons at their schools over many years? How long has this been covered up? And what about non-DPSCD schools? How many students throughout the state and

the country have been exposed to toxins in their drinking water? The demand must be raised for every school in the state to be properly tested!

* A new report from the Michigan League for Public Policy revealed that more than \$900 million was taken from Michigan's School Aid fund, legally earmarked for K-12 education, and handed to businesses and the wealthy in the form of tax cuts. This has meant that programs such as the intervention program Early On, the At-Risk School Aid Program (emphasizing third-grade reading proficiency and college-readiness), and the Great Start Readiness Program (literacy assistance) have failed to receive their state-mandated payments.

* US District Judge Stephen Murphy III ruled last June that there is "no right to literacy" guaranteed by the US Constitution.

* Michigan state legislators are seeking to push through social studies curriculum changes to drastically limit the exposure of young people to critical struggles of the past.

The issues facing educators in every district and state are the same, but the unions—controlled by wealthy executives—are keeping them divided and are actively blocking united action. The Detroit Federation of Teachers (DFT), which quashed the sickouts in 2015-16, has prevented walkouts over poisoned water in DPSCD. Instead, the union is organizing an insulting charity drive for bottled water!

The National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) limited and then betrayed the struggles in West Virginia, Oklahoma, Kentucky and Arizona. After shutting down the courageous strikes begun by rank-and-file teachers, the NEA and AFT proclaimed that workers should "remember in November" and vote for Democrats.

But the Democrats and Republicans alike claim there

is no money to fully fund high quality public education for all students while handing out tax cuts to the financial elite and funneling trillions of dollars into Wall Street and imperialist wars overseas.

The transfer of money out of Michigan's School Aid Fund began under Democratic Governor Jennifer Granholm. The 2016 shutdown of the Detroit Public Schools, designed to pay off Wall Street bondholders to the tune of \$617 million, left only \$25 million to repair the entire district's crumbling buildings—now estimated to cost between \$500 million and \$1.4 billion. This fraudulent “bailout” of Detroit schools was a boon to privatizers. This entire bait-and-switch maneuver was fully backed by local Democrats and endorsed by the Detroit Federation of Teachers.

Democrats and Republicans alike have gutted public education funding over three decades.

The destructive testing regime and “failing schools” mantra of Bush's No Child Left Behind was not just adopted by the Democrats but intensified by the Obama administration's “Race to the Top” program. Under the justly reviled billionaire Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, the Trump administration has doubled-down on this policy, increasing the class divide in education and seeking its wholesale privatization on behalf of Wall Street.

I stand in solidarity with teachers and students. It is time for teachers to form rank-and-file committees, to take this struggle out of the hands of the corporate-controlled unions and organize a nationwide strike in defense of public education. Such a struggle would find popular support not only among students and parents, but also among autoworkers, UPS workers, Amazon workers, steelworkers and broad sections of the working class all over the world who confront the same problems.

The Socialist Equality Party calls for the expropriation of the ill-gotten gains of Wall Street bankers, hedge funds and private equity funds, the transformation of the banks and financial institutions into public enterprises and the dismantling of the US war machine.

Trillions of dollars must be invested in a public works program that includes a plan to hire tens of thousands of teachers and staff with quality wages and benefits, reduce class sizes, repair older schools and build new ones, and equip all schools with the most up-to-date

books and learning technology. Higher education, including continuing education for adult workers, is a necessity in modern society and must be guaranteed to all free of charge.

Take up the fight for socialism and join my campaign!

Visit niles2018.com to donate and get involved in the campaign.



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