

Texas educators oppose Trump's fascist coup and the drive to reopen schools

Texas Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee
8 January 2021

The Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee will be holding a national online meeting at 12 p.m. CST (1 p.m. EST) this Saturday, January 9, titled, "Stop in-person learning until the pandemic is contained!" We urge all educators, parents, students and workers who wish to join the struggle to close schools and nonessential businesses to register today at wsws.org/edsafety and invite your coworkers and friends.

We, the Texas Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee, denounce the attempted coup on January 6 by Donald Trump. His effort to establish a presidential dictatorship through violence and the suppression of the results of a democratic election has the active support of far-reaching layers of the ruling elite, the police, the military and other elements of the state, including Texas Governor Greg Abbott, who has repeated all the lies about voter fraud used by Trump to whip up his fascist mob.

The primary target of this conspiracy is the working class—including the Texas educators represented by this committee. One of the coup's aim is to overcome popular opposition to the homicidal "herd immunity" policy and physically force workers into workplaces and children into schools as COVID-19 infection rates and deaths rise so that the rich can make more money than ever. This would represent a fundamental shift from traditional forms of rule under American bourgeois democracy.

We demand the immediate removal of Donald Trump and all his co-conspirators from office!

The coup attempt in Washington has highlighted the results of decades of political rot and the sclerotic character of the American political system. What happened Wednesday is the logical outcome of a decayed economic and political order that subordinates everything to the profit interests of big business.

Biden and the Democrats represent a different faction of the same ruling class that Trump and the Republicans represent and cannot be entrusted to remove Trump from office. Even after yesterday's attempted coup, they continue to downplay the dangers of the growth of fascism in the US.

Biden went so far as to encourage Trump—the principal coup plotter—to address millions of people on national television.

Our committee calls on workers in every industry to organize and prepare the broadest possible mobilization to remove Trump from office. Only through such a broad-based movement of the working class will we be able to both deter the threat of fascism and fight for our own interests.

The policies pursued by both parties during the pandemic—including the drive to reopen schools in Texas and across the US—cannot be implemented democratically. This is propelling the ruling class to turn toward fascistic politics.

We demand that school funding in Texas not be tied to attendance and enrollment!

This committee denounces Texas Governor Abbott's tying of school funding to in-person attendance as a homicidal policy. We reject the notion that—with proper funding and support—virtual learning cannot be engaging, highly educational and conducive to a healthy psychological, emotional and social disposition. We do not accept the claim that teachers and working parents stand in opposition to one another over the issue of schools reopening. They share a common interest—the well-being and healthy development of children.

In July, the Texas Education Agency and Governor Abbott first arranged for districts to receive funding based on student enrollment and attendance. This disincentivized online learning, a much safer alternative during a once-in-a-century pandemic. Accordingly, when the school year began for most Texans on September 6, there were 871 new coronavirus infections reported, but by September 21 that number had exploded to 22,276.

Many educators have died or suffered terrible complications after contracting the virus. Thousands have been denied medical accommodations to work from home, contributing to the state's five-year high for mid-year resignations. The Texas American Federation of Teachers has done nothing other than issue futile pleas to extend an 18-week grace period on this murderous policy.

At the outset of the epidemic, teachers and school districts were allowed some independence and leeway in terms of conducting their classes online. In Texas, the dreaded STAAR test was canceled and several school districts accordingly modified their curriculum standards to suit the novel environment.

Over the summer, a concerted effort to reopen schools emerged on behalf of the billionaires who control the government. Texas Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick proclaimed that “there are more important things than living.” He further declared, “We’re crushing this market ... It’s time to get back to work.” In due course, thousands of teachers, many with underlying health risks and vulnerable families, were herded back into schools.

Gone was the reprieve from the standardized tests; gone were the flexibility and academic freedom; and gone was any good faith effort to develop, monitor and improve an enriching online learning program. Instead, teachers and students were introduced to the “hybrid model,” whereby teachers have been forced to instruct live classes and simultaneously administer online lessons that followed the regimen of the typical school day.

Currently, teachers are faced with daunting workloads as they convert their traditional lessons and grading systems to a digital format, while also physically managing students during a raging pandemic. In addition to completing long, intricate spreadsheets with confusing criteria to track attendance, they must monitor students’ medical symptoms and perform hazardous cleaning in real time.

We demand an end to face-to-face and hybrid learning! All the resources necessary to make online learning successful must be guaranteed. Educators must be given the right to adjust curriculum, standards, assessments and the structure of the school day so as to best meet the needs of their students.

Teacher morale and mental health have suffered greatly. Educator testimonials on Facebook groups like Teachers Against Dying refer to nervous breakdowns, anxiety attacks and recurring nightmares, along with grim stories of sickness and death. Many educators are enduring unnecessary trauma, while others are leaving the profession altogether. We should not forget the old axiom, “A teacher’s working environment is a student’s learning environment.”

Indeed, student morale has not fared much better. Forced to sit in front of a screen for up to eight hours, attending classes that conform to traditional bell schedules (and, of course, centered around standardized tests) has caused grades to plummet and truancy to skyrocket. Further, students continue to lack basic technology, including personal laptops, internet service and Wi-Fi. Some use their phones, while others must share devices with siblings. All of

this after large private corporations received trillions in taxpayer funds via the CARES Act.

We demand that the wages and jobs of workers who must stay at home to care for children be guaranteed! There must be a massive program to hire social workers, counselors and other mental health professionals to help everyone in Texas’ school communities cope with the burdens of the pandemic.

The United States possesses unmatched wealth and material resources, but they are being hoarded by a parasitic financial elite. Over the course of 2020 alone, 500 billionaires accrued over \$1.8 trillion.

We have been presented with a manufactured dilemma, forced to choose between “lives” and “livelihoods.” This is a false choice, fabricated by both corporate parties, which have given trillions to oligarchs and artificially inflated the stock market, while demanding that schools reopen.

The fight is not between workers who need education and childcare for their children and teachers who are opposed to dying at their desks. For the wealthy, we are all “sacrificial workers,” who toil under a system that is more than willing to send us to our deaths on behalf of the Dow Jones.

We call for the formation of rank-and-file committees in schools, workplaces and communities everywhere and for the launching of a general strike across the United States!

Our committee fights to unify Texas educators with every other section of the working class—health care workers, autoworkers, meatpackers, Amazon and other logistics workers, construction workers, and more. The only way to shut down schools and nonessential production is through the unification of the entire working class in Texas, across the US and internationally.

Toward this end, we urge all Texas educators, parents and students who agree with these demands to join and help build our committee and make plans to attend the next national meeting of the Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee this Saturday, January 9, at 12 p.m. CST. Register today at wsws.org/edsafety!



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact