

“UTLA disclose the truth! This is not a win. Voting No!”

Opposition mounts to Los Angeles teachers’ tentative agreement as union seeks to silence criticism

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Los Angeles teachers: Tell us why you’re voting no by filling out the form at the bottom of this article. All submissions will be kept anonymous.

Following the snap announcement of an agreement earlier this week for 35,000 Los Angeles teachers, the United Teachers Los Angeles’ (UTLA) social media pages are being flooded with thousands of comments denouncing the sellout.

Only the “highlights” of the agreement with the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) have been released, which means there are likely many more concessions hidden in the fine print. Teachers have been kept working on the job by the UTLA since their contract expired last July.

Among the many issues being raised by teachers are the disingenuous way in which the union is attempting to sell the 21 percent raise, which is broken up into six half-year increments of 3 and then 4 percent.

One teacher said, “How about you state how our raise will be distributed? It sounds like a lump sum when in reality, it’s 7% a year! Not a win!” Another pointed out, “21% raise over 3 years is really a 7% a year. Inflation was 9% last year, this contract gives members a pay cut.” According to data from the Worldwide Cost of Living 2022, Los Angeles is the fourth-most expensive city in the world to live in.

Jack, a longtime LAUSD middle school teacher, told the WSW: “It’s not what the UTLA said they were going to deliver. They said they were going to get us 20 percent in two years, and they were very adamant about that. And then they wanted 9, 9 and 8, or 26 percent over three years. That was to counter the district’s offer of three years instead of two.

“On top of that, in a period of high inflation, you want as much money in your hand as soon as you can get it so that you’re not continuing to lose against inflation. You don’t want to string it out over three years when there will be more inflation. That money will be worth even less when it’s aligned with inflation. You’re not getting as much, and you’re getting it over a longer period of time. That’s a double loss in terms of inflation.

“But [Superintendent Alberto] Carvalho got somewhere between a 26 to 30 percent raise over his predecessor, right? Why didn’t we get that?

“But what’s really bad about it is that it absolutely screws over retirees, near-term retirees, because it’s two-tiered. We get 4 percent for the first semester, and 3 more percent for the second semester. You’re not getting a full 7 percent for any one year. And so in the eyes of CalSTRS (California State Teachers Retirement System), the ones who determine your financial retirement, you won’t have gotten the 7 percent for that year.

“This is the first time I’ve ever seen a two-tiered schedule from LA Unified. But it also allows them to get away with this moving forward. So it’s not just this year’s retirees and the next two years’ retirees. They’re going to want to keep doing this from now on.

“And I know that Silicon Valley Bank was heavily invested in CalSTRS and CalPERS [the retirement systems for the state’s teachers and public employees]. All these are tied up with this shaky banking system. And the whole banking system is a scam in the first place.

“It’s a bad deal, and that the union would allow to have this two-tiered, semester-by-semester raise is bad, bad, bad. It is anti-teacher. It’s a big scam. And I’m going to tell you why the district’s doing it. In my opinion, it

allows them to keep more money in the bank or their reserves and whatever they do with their money for longer and generate more interest off of it. And God knows where all this money goes. Nobody knows.

“That’s not right. UTLA lied to us. They said they were adamant that this is what they wanted. The union should have asked for 12 and 12, and then they could have gotten 10 and 10. Well, they’re totally in cahoots with district.”

Other major issues include the lack of additional staffing for school counselors. One counselor wrote on social media, “As a school counselor, I am voting NO! To celebrate 700:1 [student-to-counselor ratio] is insulting and just shows that our union still chooses to not support us. They did nothing to address the extremely excessive duties as assigned that are piled on top of continuous mandates and demands.”

A 2022 national rankings report from the American School Counselor Association shows that California schools have an average of 527 students for each counselor, more than double the recommended ratio of 250 to 1. LAUSD’s newly proposed student-to-counselor ratio is nearly triple the recommended ratio.

Teachers have also observed that, given the decline in enrollment over the past couple of years, many schools in the district will not even have a full-time counselor at their sites because there are not enough students.

Another added, “As a school counselor, this TA is disappointing & disheartening. I can’t vote yes when UTLA has not advocated for us. ... I work 7-8 hr shifts on campus and then a few more hrs from home to ‘keep up.’ Where’s our 3k? I know our hard work does not go unnoticed so why treat us less?”

A censorship campaign by the UTLA is underway in a bid to silence opposition. According to workers in private Facebook groups, all comments on the UTLA Facebook page have been suspended since Tuesday and remain shut down at the time of this writing. Workers on the UTLA Instagram page note that critical comments are being deleted, and the hashtag #justsaynoutla is being suppressed.

While the UTLA postures as an opponent of district leadership, both the chair of the Board of Education Jackie Goldberg and UTLA President Cecily Myart-Cruz are members of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). The DSA voted last December to impose a contract on railroad workers which they had rejected and illegalized strike action for the 120,000 workers who face dangerous conditions, including regular derailments, such as the disaster in East Palestine, Ohio, in February. In

other words, the contract was effectively written by this strikebreaking organization.

Myart-Cruz, who regularly posts on social media in militant-sounding language, is suddenly silent and nowhere to be found since the agreement has been released. She is waiting in the wings as the UTLA apparatus takes the temperature of the situation.

Workers have not forgotten the 2019 strike and sellout by the UTLA which met none of the major demands of educators, which included a fight for significantly lower class sizes and more counselors and nurses. The UTLA suddenly announced during at a midday rally that a deal had been reached and told workers to download the 40-page document online, giving 33,000 educators a measly two-hour window to vote on the contract that very evening.

The TA claims there will be a class-size reduction of two students. While still inadequate, the reduction applies only to the top 100 priority schools for the next academic year. This means the remaining 682 schools will have to wait at least until the end of the next year to see one less student in their classrooms. This will in no way alleviate class sizes, which in the elementary and high school grades are still as many as 37 to 40 students per classroom.

The “highlights” also include unspecified class caps for special education and a guarantee of more special education support staff. Recent years have seen huge cuts to special education programs in the district, which the unions have signed off on. In 2022, the district closed at least 12 special needs day classes citing low enrollment.

Teachers have to take the struggle into their own hands and cannot rely on the UTLA bureaucracy, which is betraying this struggle just as it did in 2019. They must begin forming independent rank-and-file committees where demands, actions and issues can be democratically discussed and decided on to organize the defeat of the contract by the widest possible margin, and to give themselves the means to counteract the sellout by the union tops.

The *World Socialist Web Site* is ready to provide assistance to teachers. For more information, fill out the form below.



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