

Union organizes sham vote on contract for California State faculty, where “no” means “yes”

Our reporters
14 February 2024

Help build CSU Rank-and-File Committees at every campus to fight against the CFA’s sham vote. To get involved, please fill out the form below.

We invite all to an important meeting of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IY SSE) at SDSU on Wednesday, February 14, at 7:00 p.m. PT, North Education Rm# 273—or join via zoom by registering here.

Voting began on Monday on the Tentative Agreement (TA) agreed to by the California Faculty Association (CFA) and the California State University (CSU) system.

There is widespread opposition to the deal among the 29,000 tenure track faculty, lecturers, coaches and counselors. The TA falls far short of demands for an immediate 12 percent raise. Instead, workers would get only a 5 percent raise for the 2023-2024 year and a 5 percent raise in 2024-2025 contingent on state funding.

There are also no real staffing gains, including for mental health counselors. Other issues of critical importance to faculty, including class sizes and workloads, are not even addressed by the TA or are worded so vaguely as to have no meaning at all.

Voting is being conducted electronically. But upon opening their electronic ballots Monday, workers were outraged to read the language of the ballot, which presents them with a choice between either accepting the rotten agreement or allowing the previous offer to be imposed by management.

The choices read in full:

YES—I vote YES to accept the Tentative Agreement terms reached January 2024 with scheduled raises in 2023 and 2024 and other terms and conditions negotiated in the reopeners

bargaining of 2023.

NO—I vote NO to reject the Tentative Agreement. In voting NO, I accept the terms imposed by Management January 2024.

This is a sham ballot, of the kind typically associated with dictatorships, which occasionally organize votes with no way of expressing opposition to official policies. In plain language, members have been told that by voting “No” they are not voting in favor of resuming last month’s strike, which was called off after one day by the CFA, but they must instead accept a “deal” imposed from management.

The framework is entirely illegitimate. It is designed to eliminate any means of workers expressing their opposition to the agreement and support for a genuine struggle for better wage increases and working conditions.

In its January 31 statement, the Steering Group of CSU Rank-and-File Committees warned that the CFA bureaucracy, which undemocratically called off the weeklong strike after one day, could not be trusted to carry out the vote:

The first order of business is to ensure the defeat of this contract by the widest possible margin. This vote itself, however, cannot be entrusted to the CFA bureaucracy. Instead there must be transparent voting with trustworthy rank-and-file members democratically elected among peers to be in control over all aspects of the voting system to prevent any tampering. We cannot rely on the bureaucracy, who brought us this agreement, favorable only to the CSU

trustees, to oversee the vote.

This warning has been proven correct. The CFA bureaucrats know that, in any democratically run vote, their contract would go down in flames. They are responding by running roughshod over the faculty's basic democratic rights, including the right to vote in a meaningful election.

In carrying out such an action, the CFA bureaucracy exposes itself as bitterly opposed to the workers it falsely claims to represent. It is an instrument of the CSU administration, and behind it, the Democratic Party and the profit system.

This is true not just of the CFA but of the bureaucracies which control every trade union. Last October, United Auto Workers Local 4123 betrayed 10,000 CSU graduate students and teaching assistants when it blocked a strike and imposed a contract with 5 percent wage increases as a great "victory."

It is critical that all who are opposed to this sham vote begin organizing to take the fight out of the hands of the bureaucracy and into the hands of rank-and-file faculty. This requires building the Steering Group of CSU Rank-and-File Committees at campuses across the CSU system.

The demands should include:

- **The current ballot must be thrown out and a genuine vote organized, overseen by trusted rank-and-file faculty.**
- **The entire CFA bargaining committee and all those involved in organizing this sham vote must resign. They must be replaced by trusted, rank-and-file faculty without connections to the union apparatus.**

If workers vote to reject the contract, last month's strike must be immediately resumed on an indefinite basis rather than limited in advance to one week. A strike fund must be made available to allow faculty to stay out until all of their demands are met.

The fight for rank-and-file control must also be connected with the fight to unify professors and teaching staff across all 23 campuses and broaden the fight for better conditions. Joint rank-and-file strike committees should be set up uniting faculty with graduate students and other sections of the university workforce.

A broader struggle is required to fight the skyrocketing tuition increases and starving of resources for a university education. This is a political struggle, one which pits staff against the pro-corporate Democratic Party which insists on unlimited funding for war and genocide but claims there is "no money" for education or other social needs.

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