

For an indefinite strike by University of California workers! Build a working class movement against the policies of the Trump administration!

World Socialist Web Site Healthcare Workers Newsletter
25 February 2025

The *World Socialist Web Site Healthcare Workers Newsletter* support the strikes this week by nearly 55,000 University of California workers across the expansive UC System that includes 10 campuses, five medical schools, three national laboratories, 16 health profession schools and numerous satellite facilities. We urge for the widest possible support from all sections of the working class, both in California and across the country.

The strike must become part of a broader movement by the working class in defense of public health and democratic rights against the unprecedented attacks by the Trump administration. His administration, which is already carrying out mass layoffs of Federal workers, aims to gut Medicare and Social security, the Department of Education as well as virtually all federal programs not related to the police, the military or enriching Wall Street.

He is attacking immigrant workers and carrying out mass deportations, including the ICE raids in the city of Los Angeles, which are currently underway.

A rebellion of the rank-and-file is required

The 55,000 workers are from the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Local 3299 and the University Professional and Technical Employees (UPTE-CWA). The AFSCME workers include some of the lowest-paid workers in the UC system occupying an array of critical positions, such as admitting clerks, anesthesia technicians, MRI technologists, cooks, gardeners, security guards and janitorial staff. The UPTE members include lab scientists, pharmacists, dietitians, IT workers, physician assistants, research associates and many more.

Among the striking workers are lab workers at UC Davis, including the only lab in the state with the expertise to confirm high-risk bird flu cases. Workers speaking to the *Washington Post* highlighted chronic understaffing, low wages, and poor training which have been getting worse over many years.

This week's strike will involve important sections of the healthcare workforce, with a large number of immigrant workers from Latin America, China, Laos and the Philippines, particularly in the AFSCME union. Trump's racist agitation against "foreign" workers is designed to split the working class and serve as the first step in ripping up all democratic rights.

UC workers are in a powerful position to carry out a fight against declining wages, short staffing, and overwork. Their struggle is part of a wider fight, and workers across all industries must come to their support as wages at UC set the bar for pay and working conditions throughout the state and beyond.

In order to win their demands, workers, native and immigrant born must unite and begin building their own independent organs of struggle, rank-and-file committees, at every campus, lab and hospital.

The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees is calling for emergency action to defend federal programs and stop Trump's drive for dictatorship. "Through the expansion of rank-and-file committees in every workplace, workers can build support and prepare strike action to oppose mass firings, the destruction of social programs and the privatization of public services," the statement explained.

The role of the Democrats and the union bureaucrats

Mobilizing against Trump requires independence both from the Democratic Party and the trade union bureaucracy, whose reactions to his unprecedented and illegal actions vary between indifference to outright collaboration.

Over the past six years, UC system has emerged as a major political and social battleground, where this lesson has been proven time and again. Last spring, Democratic Party officials unleashed riot cops against UC graduate students protesting the Gaza genocide. The Democrats' open support for genocide was a crucial factor in Trump's ability to take advantage of a political

vacuum and return to power four years after his attempted coup d'état. The Democrats also refused to take serious measures against Trump and his January 6 co-conspirators.

Now, with the sole exception of the proxy war in Ukraine, the Democrats are groveling before Trump. Governor Gavin Newsom made cringing public appearances with Trump during the LA fires. His budget for the next academic year contains over \$280 million dollars in budget cuts to the UC System, while the CSU system faces cuts of \$375 million.

Strikes by graduate students in 2019 at UC Santa Cruz and across all 10 campuses in 2022 were ultimately betrayed by the United Auto Workers, with a contract which left academic workers in poverty and did nothing for the immigrant students burdened with outrageous fees and impossible course loads. Now, the UAW is one of several unions which openly supports Trump's racist "America First" rhetoric.

Meanwhile, union officials in AFSCME and UPTE's parent union, the Communications Workers of America, spent over \$19 million on Democratic candidates in the last election. The pro-capitalist policies of the Democrats, above all their attacks on anti-war protesters, allowed Trump to take advantage of a political vacuum.

The officials in AFSCME and UPTE have limited this strike in advance to two and three days, respectively, and are seeking to contain the struggle to a ULP (unfair labor practices) or non-economic strike, when the main issues facing workers are poverty wages who live in areas with some of the highest costs of living in the country.

Workers cannot forget the betrayal of 2019, when AFSCME took them on six unpaid one-day strikes between March and November to wear them down and push through the current contract.

They are limiting this strike at a time where the very future of public health, education, university hospitals and laboratories are in jeopardy. With the appointment of top public health figures such as antivaxxer Robert F. Kennedy, the gutting of funding for the National Institutes of Health and Centers for Disease Control and mass layoffs at the Department of Health and Human Services, Trump is declaring war on public health and even centuries of established medical science.

This is why this strike is above all a political struggle. Workers are not just fighting for themselves but against the control of a tiny oligarchy over every aspect of society.

A program to fight Trump

The WSWs calls for a mass mobilization of the working class against the new government. This must be directed above all at the source of dictatorship in the capitalist profit system.

Rank-and-file committee, composed of workers and not union officials or Democratic Party operatives, must be built to give workers the power to countermand decisions that violate their will and provide the means to link up with workers across the UC

system, the healthcare industry and around the world. Workers are already building a network of such committees, through the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees.

To prepare such a fight, we propose a rank-and-file committee of UC workers concentrate on the following program:

- Rehire and refund all the federal workers! Expand the strike from a two-day to an indefinite strike, drawing in the entire workforce of the UC system and beyond into a political struggle to stop the assaults on the working class.

- Hands off Public Education! No Budget cuts to UC, CSU, or K-12 Education! Any claim that there is "no money" is a lie. Trillions are squandered to fund genocide and imperialist war. California has 181 billionaires, their wealth must be expropriated.

- Hands off healthcare! Trillions must be allocated to guarantee free and high-quality public healthcare. This must be funded by transforming major corporations into publicly owned enterprises, transferring wealth from the corporate parasites, supporting fascism and war, to the workers who produce the wealth.

- Funding for Research! Hands off NIH! Throw out anti-science quack RFK Jr.! Labs performing critical work are facing threats. Vaccines and a turn toward the highest scientific understanding of viruses is critical, particularly given the ongoing COVID, the threat of bird flu and future pandemics.

- Defend our immigrant brothers and sisters! Workers must insist that regardless of origin, immigrant workers have the right to live and work wherever they choose. Called "essential" during the pandemic across many critical industries, immigrant workers are being scapegoated by parasitic billionaires who want to gut all social services and public health.

- An end to war! Trillions are being sucked out of the working class and funneled into criminal wars for markets, natural resources and supply chains, with the workers of the world being killed. The genocide in Gaza, the war in Ukraine and all other imperialist wars must be ended, including Trump administration which has set its crosshairs on China. The resources squandered on the military used to rebuild those societies and improve living standards all over the world.

If you agree with this program, then contact the WSWs today! Fill out the form at wsws.org/workers for more information about rank-and-file committees.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact