

“We have no real power unless we unite”: Teachers rally in defense of education, against Trump across California

Rena Cassimeda, Kimie Saito
18 May 2025

This weekend, the California Teachers Association (CTA) held statewide “Fight for Our Schools” rallies. The rallies drew thousands of educators, school staff, students, parents and workers, reflecting the deep and growing anger towards the Trump administration’s assault on public education.

The Trump administration’s second term has unleashed an unprecedented assault on public education, threatening the futures of millions of students, educators, and communities across the United States. Trump’s proposed budget for fiscal year 2026 slashes \$12 billion from federal education funding, and his administration plans to shut down entirely the Department of Education.

This is a component of Trump’s drive toward authoritarian rule—a dictatorship of the oligarchy—determined to smash every social gain won by the working class.

The determined attitude of the crowds this weekend contrasted sharply with speeches from union bureaucrats, who sought to divert attendees towards the dead end of pressuring the Democratic Party.

At one point in his speech at the rally in San Diego, CTA President David Goldberg stated, “We’re going to go to Sacramento to tell those people to be a *real* resistance and tell the Trump administration to keep your hands off our students!”

In reality, California Governor Gavin Newsom, a Democrat, is aiming to slash at least \$129 million from the University of California system, another \$144 million from the California State University system and cuts in K-12, and over \$70 million in foster youth education and support programs. The multimillionaire governor is also pushing for a statewide ban on homeless encampments and his budget would ban immigrants from accessing health care benefits.

Workers Socialist Web Site
a number of educators and their supporters.

“I’m here because Elon Musk and Donald Trump are trying to cut \$1.2 billion from LAUSD [Los Angeles Unified School District], and when we do the math that’s about \$3,000 per student,” one teacher said. “Schools are already in shambles. The food is inadequate, they can’t drink the water because it tastes like pennies ... there’s roaches in the classroom.”

“Teachers already have to go on strike every year,” she continued. “We can’t afford to lose \$50 from every student, let alone \$3,000.”

On immigration, she said: “My students have had family deported already. I’ve had students who are part of the group of immigrants who are ‘willingly’ leaving—you know, ‘self-deportation,’ they say.”

The Democrats “say they are different from the Republicans, but honestly in my view it’s part of the same machine. They’re still dropping bombs, they’re still taking money from Israel, and at the end of the day it’s not really about red and blue, it’s about the rich versus the poor. Most people in this country are working class, and we need a working class party.”

Rejecting “America First,” she declared: “the workers in the United States are going through similar things as workers in Mexico, workers in Palestine, workers in Egypt, workers in Asia and Europe and Canada—you name it. And we have no real power unless we unite.”

A special education teacher from Los Angeles said: “The current authoritarian regime is attacking education, but it’s specifically having a really bad impact on special education students. I don’t want to live in a society where we can’t take care of the most vulnerable.”

“There’s way too many students in the classroom per teacher. The teachers are overworked, the education

quality suffers. In special education, these cuts that are happening now are attacking the IEPs, the Individualized Education Plans of our students. That's the enforcement mechanism for civil rights for people with disabilities in the education system."

He added: "Protests are often just a therapeutic device to redirect our energy and anger. It needs to be focused, and honestly it needs to be international."

When asked about her thoughts on the Democrats, one LA teacher responded: "At this moment in time? Trash! They will come out and talk to us and talk to our communities when they need our vote, and then once they're in office they're not doing anything. I don't see what they're doing to protect us from Trump. Gavin Newsom is basically doing whatever Trump wants him to do, as are all of the legislators. I'm sorry, Bernie Sanders and [Alexandria] Ocasio-Cortez, that's not enough."

In San Diego, Pam, a retired psychotherapist, said: "I've just finished, actually an open ended strike against Kaiser and this, these, these threats to the public education system, I see this as being very connected, in that wherever there are profits to be made, privatization occurs, and that's certainly happened at Kaiser. Kaiser's strategy relative to the strike was to wait us out until people could no longer afford to be off ... due to economic reasons. And some people did return to work for that reason, and I don't fault them."

While describing herself as a Democrat, she added that, "both parties engage in behaviors that I find detestable. You know, accepting money from Kaiser lines the pockets of Democrats and Republicans alike. Gavin Newsom, in years gone by, has advocated single payer health care for everyone. He doesn't talk about that anymore. Now he wants to take it away from immigrants, but *supposedly* not because he's anti-immigrant, but for the state's financial situation. It's the same behavior that we see from Republicans, going after the most vulnerable."

"And they are wanting to reopen Alcatraz," she continued. "Oh, my god, yeah, it is not going to be stopping with the most vulnerable. They are coming for everyone who opposes them."

The financial elite, she concluded, "are focused on cheap labor. They think 'we don't need them to be educated. If they're educated, they're going to be more resistant.' And meanwhile, a relative few profit tremendously."

The way forward for educators, staff, students, and the entire working class does not lie in the dead ends of the

Democratic Party or the union bureaucracy.

The struggle to defend public education and democratic rights requires workers to organize themselves independently through a network of rank-and-file committees, independent of the union bureaucrats and capitalist parties. These committees must be formed in every school, district, and community, uniting educators with other sections of the working class in a common struggle against layoffs, budget cuts, and the destruction of public education.

The perspective on offer by the organizers of this weekend's rallies, like the highly publicized "Fighting Oligarchy" tour by Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, is a political trap, designed to channel opposition back into the Democratic Party which refuses to fight Trump. This is because the Democrats, the other party of Wall Street, are more afraid of a mass movement than they are of Trump and fascism.

The union bureaucrats either propose to "fight" Trump with toothless email writing campaigns, as promoted by the National Education Association (NEA) and American Federation of Teachers (AFT), or are outright collaborating with him, or both.

Recently, the NEA held a webinar urging educators to appeal to Republican legislators as "allies" against Trump. Meanwhile, AFT President Randi Weingarten supports collaborating with Secretary of Education Linda McMahon on the Trump administration's "school-to-factory" pipeline, preparing young people for the workforce or the military. Weingarten's role in helping reopen schools during the pandemic also brought her into alignment with extreme right anti-vaxxers of the type who are now in Trump's cabinet.

This shows the bureaucracy's loyalty is to the capitalist system, not to educators or students.

The struggle to defend public education is impossible without a fight against capitalist exploitation and inequality, which finds its most concentrated expression in the Trump government. Workers must mobilize in a general fight against the corporate oligarchy, fighting for the expropriation of the wealth drawn from workers' labor and its use to fund schools and other social needs.



To contact the WWSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wwsws.org/contact