

Nurses at Long Beach and Alhambra: Build Rank-and-File Committees to take the struggle into your own hands!

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For assistance in building a Healthcare Workers Rank-and-File Committee, contact the World Socialist Web Site.

The strike set for Thursday, May 22 by registered nurses at MemorialCare Long Beach Medical Center and Miller Children's and Women's Hospital in Long Beach, along with Alhambra Hospital Medical Center in Alhambra, California, is a courageous stand which deserves the support of all workers in southern California and the United States. The strike can and should become part of a broader fight pitting the working class against the corporate oligarchy which rules society.

What nurses are striking against are universal features of for-profit healthcare. This includes unsafe staffing, brutal workloads, and cuts that endanger everyone who walks through their hospital doors.

At Long Beach Medical Center and its affiliate children's hospital, management has slashed staff, overloaded units, and ignored basic safety protocols. Nurses report being assigned to multiple critical patients on different floors. Emergency Room and Intensive Care Unit staffing has been gutted. Wards are stretched beyond capacity. These cuts directly violate California's own safe staffing laws—and nurses are the ones forced to pay the price.

Conditions at Alhambra Hospital Medical Center are no better. Nurses there face similar staffing shortages, lack of support, and management indifference. To add insult to injury, on May Day—International Workers' Day—MemorialCare announced its latest round of layoffs. This also came just after nurses voted overwhelmingly to strike.

These are part of a broader policy, rooted in the class interests of the corporate oligarchy which controls society and which treats human life and nurses as expendable. Under the Trump administration, hundreds of thousands of federal jobs and entire departments are on the chopping block. Public education is being gutted. The U.S. Postal Service is being carved up for corporate profit.

Figures like Robert F. Kennedy Jr. have become mouthpieces for a deranged anti-science campaign, spreading lies about vaccines, "deep state" conspiracies, chemtrails, and child trafficking by government agencies.

What is unfolding is class war. But workers are beginning to fight back. This strike is part of a broader and deepening class struggle, with healthcare workers once again in the front ranks:

- In Connecticut nearly 8,000 nursing home workers are preparing to strike May 27.

- Over 800 Butler Hospital workers in Rhode Island began an open-ended strike May 15 over similar issues.

- At University Medical Center in New Orleans, nurses staged a one-day strike May 1 against workplace violence and stalled talks.

Nurses at Butler Memorial Hospital in Pennsylvania are on strike over staffing, safety, and contract negotiations.

- On May 20, over 300 SEIU Health Care Michigan members at five Detroit-area Ciena nursing homes held a one-day strike over low pay, lack of benefits, and expired contracts.

- The same day, nearly 1,000 1199SEIU members at five Western New York nursing homes began a seven-day unfair labor practice strike, citing changes to overtime and health insurance.

- On May 18–22, University of Rochester Medicine homecare workers struck, demanding manageable caseloads and better health coverage, following tense negotiations and alleged labor violations.

Workers in other industries are also fighting. New Jersey Transit workers struck last weekend, shutting down one of the busiest commuter railroads in the country. In Los Angeles, the contract expires for over 30,000 teachers this summer, as classroom conditions deteriorate and living costs skyrocket.

The response of the ruling class to the irresistible growth of this movement is to prepare for open dictatorship through

Trump. But the outcome will depend on whether workers are able to organize themselves, not only against Trump and his feckless “opponents” in the Democratic Party, but against the bureaucratic apparatuses which control the unions and are deliberately trying to divert and shut down their struggles.

By channeling the strike into a one-day “Unfair Labor Practice” framework, the union officials of the California Nurses Association/National Nurses United have effectively stripped it of its political and social content. What should be a broad confrontation with fascism, austerity and corporate power is instead reduced to a legal protest over management conduct.

Indeed, the fact that the one-day strike will be followed by a four-day lockout underscores how the union officials hold workers back from answering management blow-for-blow. An indefinite strike, not one limited in advance to one day which will accomplish nothing, is needed.

Time and again, the CNA/NNU has betrayed its members. In 2022, it sabotaged the Long Beach nurses’ strike by pushing through a sellout agreement as momentum was building. In March of this year—before the strike vote even occurred—the union was already boasting of “tentative agreements” on procedural trivia like grievance meetings and unpaid leave. These deals mean nothing in the face of mass layoffs, deteriorating care, and unsafe conditions.

The same dynamic is being repeated everywhere. The SEIU, rather than uniting nursing home worker across the Northeast, are dividing up the strikes in New York, Connecticut and Rhode Island. On Trump, the bureaucrats either divert workers into pointless letter-writing campaigns or, in the case of the United Auto Workers, Teamsters and others, openly collaborate with his “America First” incitement against foreign and immigrant workers.

If nurses are to win this fight, they must organize independently of the union bureaucracy. Rank-and-file committees—democratically controlled by nurses themselves, and independent of the CNA/NNU and the Democratic Party—are essential to take this struggle forward.

Rank-and-file committees are a new form of leadership—rooted in the workplace, accountable to the workers themselves, and dedicated to telling the truth. They do not ask for permission. They act.

Such committees are being built across the country. At USPS, a national Rank-and-File Committee is organizing against privatization, surveillance, and collaboration between management and union leadership. Across the world, workers are joining the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees, the organizing center of this emerging movement. Nurses must follow suit.

These committees must be established in every hospital,

connected across hospitals, cities, and states, and linked up with workers in other industries. Postal workers, transit workers, teachers, logistics workers, and entertainment workers—millions face the same enemy, and only unified action can turn the tide.

The following demands represent an initial program of struggle—one that nurses themselves must fight for:

Rank-and-file enforcement of safe staffing ratios, to be set exclusively by nurses, not administrators or politicians.

Doubling of staff in ER, ICU, peds, and med-surg units.

Reinstatement of all laid-off workers with full back pay.

- A 40 percent across-the-board wage increase to meet inflation and compensate for sacrifices during COVID.

- Abolition of forced overtime and unsafe scheduling practices.

- Full transparency: the public release of all hospital financial records.

Immediate halt to executive bonuses and raises.

- Conversion of all part-time and temp roles into full-time positions with benefits.

A publicly funded, universal healthcare system—healthcare as a human right, not a commodity. This must be done by expropriating the private healthcare industry, to be run by workers themselves for social need, not profit.

To build such committees, nurses must begin by identifying the most trusted and principled coworkers—those who will not back down, who are ready to fight. Committees should issue statements, link with other committees nationally and internationally, and prepare for broader action, including joint strikes and general strikes.

Nurses are not simply fighting for better conditions. They are fighting against a system that sacrifices life for profit, subsidizes war while cutting care, and criminalizes the poor while enriching billionaires.

Contact us. Organize now. There is no time to lose.



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