

Build rank-and-file strike committees to take the fight forward!

Minneapolis teachers overwhelmingly authorize strike

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Are you a Minneapolis Public Schools educator? Tell the WSWS what you think about the contract negotiations, budget cuts and strike vote. Your comments will be published anonymously to protect your identity.

Following a strike vote last month, the Minneapolis Federation of Educators (MFE) Local 59 announced last Monday night that 92 percent of Minneapolis educators voted to authorize a walkout. The vote follows seven months of negotiations between the MFE and Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS), and comes as the district faces a \$75–\$110 million budget deficit and plans to cut over 400 positions from schools.

MFE officials have now filed an intent to strike, giving MPS a 10-day notice as required by state law, meaning teachers could go on strike as early as November 11.

Minneapolis educators' opposition is part of a broader resurgence of resistance to declining living standards and working conditions. A strike would be the second time Minneapolis educators walked out since the three-week strike sold out by the MFE bureaucracy in 2022. Before that teachers in the city had not struck since 1974.

Educators have voted overwhelmingly to strike amid the Trump administration's rapid buildup of a fascist dictatorship that is abducting immigrant workers and their families in preparation to repress all opposition to poverty and war. The White House is waging a war against public education and teachers: gutting funding for low-income, special education and English-learner students and Head Start, censoring and victimizing teachers and moving to transform schools into centers for religious, nationalist and militarist indoctrination.

Teachers and support staff face shortages and decades of wage stagnation, which the sellout of the previous strike left unresolved. The MFE says it is pushing to lower classroom size caps—for example, reducing

kindergarten caps from 22 to 20 students—achieve pay equity for adult educators who currently earn less than their K–12 counterparts, and secure across-the-board wage increases. The latter includes 7 percent in the first year and 6 percent in the second year for teachers, and 12 percent in the first year and 10 percent in the second year for support staff. Minneapolis Public Schools projects a \$75–\$110 million budget shortfall for the 2025–26 school year. District officials chiefly blame the deficit on the loss of Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief Funds (ESSER), the federal pandemic school funding program that the Biden administration allowed to expire.

According to the district, MPS received \$264.6 million in COVID-relief federal funding and spent around \$60 million annually during fiscal years 2022–24 to maintain staffing levels and service levels.

Even before the pandemic, the school district was hit by the massive tax cuts the Democratic and Republican legislators handed to UnitedHealth Group, 3M, Target, Best Buy and other highly profitable Minnesota-based corporate giants. The expansion of for-profit charter schools has also siphoned taxpayer money from public education.

In Minnesota, Democratic Party administrations at local, state and federal levels have overseen decades of education cuts. The same playbook is being used in Minneapolis as in St. Paul, Detroit, Flint and other districts: proclaim a budget crisis, demand massive cuts, and rely on union apparatuses to suppress worker opposition.

As the WSWS warned about the St. Paul sellout contract, district officials "boasted that the proposed contract stayed within their budget limits and will not add to the school system's deficit," while simultaneously preparing "massive cuts" and admitting "there are still

some very hard budget decisions that will have to be made.” This will only be worsened as Trump guts federal funding, which makes up 19 percent of the school district’s revenue.

MPS plans to eliminate more than 400 positions, including 116 teachers, cut student support services by 23 percent and has issued threats to close up to 22 schools to save an estimated \$23 million. School officials and Democratic Party politicians are counting on the complicity of the leadership of the MFE, which released conciliatory statements to media, claiming that “No one wants to strike,” although 92 percent of their members just voted to do so.

The MFE’s parent organizations, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the National Education Association (NEA), have opposed any collective action to oppose Trump’s existential threat to public education, including the sellout of Chicago teachers earlier this year and the months-long sabotage of strike action by tens of thousands of educators in Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego and other California districts. Terrified that a mass movement against Trump could escape their control and threaten the corporate interests both parties defend, the AFT and NEA bureaucracy have told educators to look to the courts and the election of Democrats in 2026 to oppose what AFT President Randi Weingarten acknowledges is Trump’s fascist agenda.

In contrast to the cowardice and complicity of the union bureaucracy, educators who spoke with the *World Socialist Web Site* expressed their determination to fight. One Minneapolis teacher said, “Our democracy can’t exist without the cornerstone of public education. Regardless of someone’s social and economic status, they still have the right to a free and appropriate public education. As teachers, we get all those students from different social and economic backgrounds, and they become the future.

“Our society can’t continue to exist if we don’t have the funds for public education to educate all these students. And especially for our special education students. As public schools, we don’t say, ‘We don’t want these students in our schools’, whereas private schools and charter schools can say, ‘The needs of these students are too much, too expensive.’

“I think about capitalism and look at the state of Louisiana where it’s really hard to find a public school. It’s mostly charters. Billionaires know how much money is poured into education. They want to use these grants to dismantle public education and make a profit. In our

school, teachers are very concerned about our undocumented students. It’s just very nerve-wracking to know that we could have federal agents come into our building. How do we maneuver against that?

“Another problem is all the doxing that occurs. The far-right is going after teachers that express their political beliefs on social media. These far-right groups can find where you work, who your employer is and harass you 24/7. Educators were being doxed because of what they believe about Charlie Kirk, who was a fascist.”

When asked about the role of the Democratic Party, the teacher replied, “I’m in my late 20’s now. I remember voting for Hillary Clinton. I was very excited to be a Democrat. Now that I’m older, I’m disappointed with the Democrats.”

Educators must reject the fraudulent claim of “no money,” while Minnesota billionaires and corporations hoard unprecedented wealth and at the federal level \$1 trillion a year is spent on war. The prerequisite for any struggle is the building of rank-and-file committees in every school to transfer power from the union apparatus to teachers and support staff in the schools. These committees must organize educators to demand the immediate enforcement of the strike mandate by the membership and the preparation of collective action throughout the state and beyond to fight Trump’s attack on public education, bipartisan austerity measures, and the assault on immigrants and democratic rights.

Minneapolis educators must link up their struggle with educators and broader sections of the working class across the country and international borders through the expansion of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC). An industrial counter-offensive of the working class must be combined with a political struggle to expropriate the oligarchs, transform the corporate giants into public utilities and organize the economy along socialist lines based on human need, not profit.

To join the fight for rank-and-file committees, fill out the form below.



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