

Striking Kaiser healthcare workers: “A general strike could be very powerful”

Kimie Saito, David Benson, Jonathan Burleigh, Bryan Dyne
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The open-ended strike by 31,000 Kaiser Permanente healthcare workers finished its third day Wednesday as registered nurses, pharmacists and others across California and Hawaii continue to fight for improved staffing, benefits and inflation-busting wages.

Approximately 28,000 workers in Southern California, 2,800 in Northern California and 250 in Hawaii have gone on strike at more than two dozen hospitals and hundreds of clinics.

The Kaiser strike is part of a broader wave of healthcare workers’ struggles across the country. In New York City, 15,000 nurses began striking on January 12 in what has become the largest nurses’ strike in the city’s history. Nurses at New York-Presbyterian/Columbia, Mount Sinai and Montefiore are demanding protections against healthcare benefits cuts, improved staffing ratios, workplace violence protections and wage increases of approximately 40 percent.

In Michigan, hundreds of nurses at Henry Ford Genesys Hospital in Grand Blanc remain on strike over staffing ratios and wages. Nurses at Seattle Children’s Hospital voted to authorize a strike in December 2025, and healthcare workers at multiple Oregon facilities are either on strike or preparing authorization votes.

The Kaiser strike also began just days after the ICE execution of Alex Petti, a 37-year-old intensive care unit VA nurse in Minneapolis, and amid growing support for a national general strike against the Trump administration.

“A general strike could be very powerful if you have the commitment of the people because the power is with the people,” one striker told the *World Socialist Web Site* on the picket line outside Kaiser’s Oakland Medical Center. “I mean, we do the work. We make the money. We’re those parts in the factory that produce the goods. You stop making the goods, that’s that. I mean there’s strength in numbers and at some point you’ve got to flip the board.”

The worker also commented on the Trump administration’s attack on immigrants. “I think once you’re here, you have due process and you can’t do what they’re

doing. But I do think that they’ve subverted ICE into a private militia for the federal government.

“I’ve seen the reports from people that have been following ICE and how they are using databases that they shouldn’t be accessing because these people are not being investigated. So they’re infringing on their personal rights and then now using that to intimidate them. In some of the videos I’ve seen, some people have said, ‘Yeah, I’m not going to follow them anymore because I’m scared. I’m worried about my safety now.’ And, I mean, you know, when we sit back and we’re afraid, I mean, that’s not America.”

Commenting on the escalation of ICE activities elsewhere, including in Maine and Eugene, Oregon, the worker continued, “They relocated Bovino and sent in [White House Border Czar] Tom Homan, that ham-faced guy who’s just as evil. I’m going to guess they’re going to pop up in another blue state [i.e., one controlled by the Democratic Party] somewhere. They’ve constantly, I think, escalated their playbook. They start in California but they go somewhere else and go even harder.”

In San Diego, workers told the WSWS, “We’re on strike to support better staffing. We want to be able to support our patients better. We want to have better outcomes for our patients. And we also want to get paid a fair wage. It is very expensive to live in San Diego.”

A number of nurses our reporters spoke to had also seen videos produced by the WSWS of the nurses strike in New York City. “We stand with you,” one worker said, speaking to the striking nurses. “We really support you, and I hope that you guys get what you’re fighting for because we’re fighting for the same thing.”

The worker continued, commenting on Alex Petti, “To be blunt, it’s really [messed] up. But this stuff has been going on forever. People have been getting killed, especially brown and black people. And it’s unfortunate that it took a nurse getting killed for people that really wake up and understand, like, what’s going on in this country. ... It’s really, really bad. This should really light a fire under

everyone that we need to come together against this regime.”

When asked about a general strike to unite the struggles of workers across the country, they responded “Absolutely. I think that we need to, like, have the power of the people. I mean, we are the ones that should be running this country. ... I think the Democrats are really not doing anything right now. It’s really sad the way that they’re acting and reacting to this and acting like there’s not actual video proof of what happened.”

Reporters from the WSWS also raised the need for workers to form rank-and-file committees in every workplace, school and neighborhood, democratically controlled, independent of the trade union apparatus and tasked with preparing mass action, to which the healthcare worker replied, “I think that sounds like a great idea because what we’re doing now is not really working. So we need to all come together as a people and really fight.”

In Los Angeles, one midwife said, “I love doing what I do. It’s heartbreaking to know that they continue to have signs that say that Kaiser is leading the nation with maternity health, oncology, and whatnot. Who got him there? It’s the healthcare workers, the advanced practice practitioners, the midwives, the nurse practitioners, the PAs, as well as their registered nurses, as well as your CNAs, your housekeepers, maintenance, everybody. Everybody has gotten these big corporations to where they are now. We are out here fighting for our rights.

“It is shameful and it is heartbreaking what happened to Alex Petti. We’re just trying to do the right thing. It’s in us to be able to help people, and we can’t even do that in our country today there’s so much violence and there’s so much hate. I don’t know where we live anymore it’s heartbreaking. ... I feel like this administration has not done anything to really bring hope, to strengthen each and every one of us and all I can say is we just we really need to stand for what we believe in.”

Another registered nurse said, “It’s just too heartbreaking for me to even watch the video of Alex. I have not watched it nor do I want to. It’s devastating what happened to him and he didn’t deserve that. I also stand strongly in solidarity with New York and with Michigan, and I’m so proud of them for keeping the line.”

Another said: “Nowadays, nurses are just so overworked and having to chart so many things for the bureaucracy that the love of nursing goes away.

“You’re spending more time charting than actually at the bedside with the patients. And it’s kind of demoralizing. And it would just be nice to be able to have safe patient ratios and staffing to where you could go back to the basics, where you can talk to your patient, when you can walk with

your patient, where you can even bathe your patient, because nowadays that’s just impossible to do.

“My niece is a teacher for LAUSD, and she just tells me all the time about how the working conditions are just horrible and how she feels like she has to protect her students because a lot of them are immigrants.”

UNAC/UHCP bureaucrats continue to host various Democratic Party officials on the picket lines in an attempt to contain the quickly emerging support for a general strike back into the channels of bourgeois electoral politics. In National City, California Councilmember Jose Rodriguez visited the picket lines this morning asserting that the strike is “about more than a contract, it’s about patient care and community health.” He made no mention of the ICE murder of Alex Petti or voiced support for a unified struggle of California and New York healthcare workers.

The Democrats’ “support” is aimed at preventing it from coalescing into a broader political movement against the corporate oligarchy, whom they represent as much as Trump.

Workers in healthcare and every other industry must fight to overcome this isolation. The strike against Kaiser, which has openly supported and directed billions of dollars to ICE operations, is ultimately a challenge to the profit interests that have degraded healthcare and society as a whole for decades. The murder of Renée Nicole Good and Alex Petti are only the most visceral examples that the ruling elite and its jackbooted thugs are more than willing to sacrifice human life on the altar of corporate profits.

The necessity of breaking with the Democratic Party and the trade union apparatus and forming rank-and-file committees is critical. Workers must put forward their own independent demands on their own independent initiative, including to abolish ICE and for the arrest of all those who are responsible for Petti’s murder, from Trump on down.

They must connect with other committees built at every factory, workplace and neighborhood and begin building a mass movement against inequality and dictatorship.



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