

Vote “no” on the SEIU sellout agreement for Los Angeles school workers!

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Build a movement against the sellout! Fill out the form below for help building a rank-and-file committee at your school or workplace.

At 2:30 in the morning on April 15, with tens of thousands of workers set to begin the first simultaneous walkout of all employees in the history of the Los Angeles Unified School District, SEIU Local 99 members received an email announcing a last-minute deal. The strike was canceled before it could begin. Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass had personally intervened in talks late that night to ensure it never happened.

The next morning, Bass appeared at a press conference alongside the presidents of SEIU, United Teachers Los Angeles and the Associated Administrators of Los Angeles. Los Angeles County Federation of Labor President Yvonne Wheeler made the purpose of the gathering clear. “We would rather be here today than on the picket line,” she said. The assembled union executives and officials applauded.

The tentative agreement now being put to a ratification vote, with voting concluding on May 8, is the direct product of that operation. The *World Socialist Web Site* urges SEIU Local 99 members to vote no.

But rejection alone is not enough. What is required is a fundamentally different strategy, rooted in new forms of organization through which workers can wage a genuine struggle independent of the union apparatus and the Democratic Party it serves.

A trap set before the vote is counted

The central fraud of this contract is that it conceals massive cuts just over the horizon.

LAUSD is operating under a “fiscal stabilization plan” with a projected deficit of \$877 million for the 2026–27 school year and a further \$443 million the year after that. The district has already issued 3,200 layoff notices and cut at least 657 jobs. Superintendent Alberto Carvalho acknowledged in February that even these cuts may not go far enough, stating: “At some point, we reached a breaking point.”

A new budget proposal for the next school year is expected in mid-May—days after the ratification vote closes. By the time

workers see what the district has actually planned for them, they will already have ratified a contract and surrendered their right to strike. That sequence is not a coincidence. It is the point.

Workers considering this contract should look at what has already happened in Oakland. There, following a 91 percent strike authorization, the Oakland Education Association signed a tentative agreement on February 27. Two days later, the school board voted to eliminate 421 positions—roughly 10 percent of district staff.

In San Francisco, educators struck for four days in February before the union shut the strike down; layoffs followed under a multi-year “fiscal recovery” plan. In Chicago, massive cuts followed ratification of new contracts last year. And on April 30, the Philadelphia school board voted to close 17 public schools, following a new contract last year.

The union bureaucracy has worked to conceal this reality. After Bass and the unions canceled the strike on April 15, acting superintendent Andrés Chait said the district would “appeal to Sacramento” for additional state funding. Bass, standing alongside the union executives, insisted the delegation had “solidarity” and would go to the state capital together.

This is a cynical pre-written script. California Governor Gavin Newsom is managing a \$21 billion state deficit of his own. The same Democratic Party apparatus that controls Sacramento, that controls City Hall through Bass, and that controls the LAUSD board majority—this is the party being asked to reverse the austerity that it itself is imposing.

The wage fraud

Even setting aside what is being prepared for next month, the contract’s headline figures do not hold up on their own terms.

The average salary for SEIU classified workers is \$35,501—already classified as “extremely low income” in Los Angeles County. Many workers earn closer to \$30,000 working the 10-month school year. A 24 percent increase over three years, against a cost-of-living environment where rent, food, gas and childcare continue rising, is not a raise. It is a managed continuation of poverty.

It staggers increases every six months, meaning workers spend

significant portions of each year at lower wage levels before each adjustment applies. When the increases are modeled as they actually take effect over time—rather than simply added together—the claim of a “24 percent” raise collapses. And that is before accounting for inflation.

The contract’s provisions

Like the United Teachers Los Angeles deal, the SEIU agreement includes vague language on subcontracting and “insourcing” that in practice grants the union a consultative role in the outsourcing process rather than ending it. The creation of joint task forces and committees mirrors the provisions in the teachers’ contract—the “Climate Literacy Task Force,” housing committees, professional development committees—that promise future improvements while committing to nothing concrete. These structures only provide union officials with a seat at the table and a reason to ask workers to wait.

The benefits provisions allow workers to combine hours from multiple assignments to qualify for health coverage. But this does not solve the problem of insufficient hours in any single job, it institutionalizes the problem. Workers are told to patch together two or more part-time positions, often across different sites and schedules, to qualify for basic benefits. The arrangement adds longer commutes, unpredictable hours and greater physical and emotional strain while leaving the core issue completely untouched.

The agreement’s tiered rollout of improved hours deserves particular attention. Special education assistants and bus drivers receive immediate increases to seven- and eight-hour positions upon ratification. Food service workers must wait until July 2026 for a six-hour minimum. Unit B and G employees are pushed to July 2027, with only a four-hour minimum. This structure is not simply unfair, it is designed to pit workers against each other.

The political function of the deal

The operation to block a strike in Los Angeles exposes the fundamental role of the union apparatus. It is structurally integrated with the Democratic Party and the financial interests dictating austerity policy.

In city after city, overwhelmingly governed by Democrats, sweeping cuts are being imposed to close budget deficits in schools, transit systems and municipal services.

There is no shortage of resources. Enormous wealth is concentrated in the hands of a financial oligarchy. Military spending and corporate profits take priority over social needs at every level of government. Trump and the entire Congress, including Democratic senators who have called for an even larger Pentagon budget, are preparing to allocate more than \$1.5 trillion

for the Fiscal Year 2027 military budget, a near-50 percent increase in a single year.

Meanwhile, American billionaires’ wealth has surged to \$8.4 trillion—roughly nine times what the country spends on K-12 public education each year. The claim that there is no money for schools is a lie. The money exists. The question is who controls it and in whose interests it is deployed.

What workers must do

The contract must be rejected. But a “no” vote is the beginning of a struggle, not its conclusion.

The experience of the UTLA and SEIU negotiations has demonstrated that workers cannot conduct a genuine fight through the existing union apparatus, which at every turn has acted to isolate struggles, divide workers and impose concessions. What is required is a new organizational form: rank-and-file committees, democratically controlled by workers themselves, independent of the union bureaucracy and both capitalist parties.

Such committees can do what the union apparatus will not: link up across schools, bus yards, food service facilities and other workplaces; formulate clear demands for living wages, full-time hours, genuine job security and real protection for immigrant communities; coordinate with education workers across the country; and prepare action independent of the apparatus.

This is what the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) is fighting to build internationally, as workers in education and every other sector confront the same political establishment and the same pattern of betrayal. The struggle of LAUSD classified workers is part of that broader fight.

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