

# After strike betrayal, Los Angeles schools cut more than 1,000 jobs, with 6,000 more on the way in the coming years

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More than 1,000 workers at the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) are losing their jobs after the Board of Education voted 5-to-2 to approve layoffs. The plan affects 657 positions, while district management separately and quietly terminated hundreds of additional employees. Teachers, support counselors, classroom aides, campus supervisors, gardeners, transportation workers and clerical staff are all being swept out—and the worst is still to come.

According to a newly unveiled “fiscal stabilization plan,” the district is preparing cuts totaling more than \$3.6 billion over the next three years, projecting more than 6,000 total job losses approaching 10 percent of LAUSD’s entire workforce, along with pay cuts, seven unpaid furlough days, individual contributions to health insurance premiums and school closures.

Support workers are being particularly impacted. 254 clerical workers and library aides in Civil Service Employees Association Local 500 are being targeted. Bus supervisors, gardeners and transportation workers in SEIU Local 99, a local including the lowest paid workers in the district averaging \$35,000 a year, are also affected.

Beyond the board’s formal vote, the district quietly issued non-renewal notices to 291 credentialed teachers on temporary status, along with 51 pupil services counselors, 143 instructional aides, 114 campus aides and 336 school supervision aides, let go without even the procedural protections the board’s vote required.

As IT support worker Ruben Alarcon told the board: “Why are the essential workers being treated as expendable? These employees are not the cause of this crisis. They are the reason our schools continue functioning despite the crisis.”

The layoffs were made possible by the union bureaucracy’s last-minute cancellation of a district-wide strike which was set to begin April 15. In the early hours of April 13, the Sunday before the strike was to begin, United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA) announced a new contract. Later that same evening, the Associated Administrators of Los Angeles (AALA) announced its own separate deal. Then, at 2:30 in the morning on Tuesday, and with only hours to go before the strike, the SEIU announced a deal following a late-night intervention by Los Angeles’s Democratic Party mayor Karen Bass.

By morning, Bass stood at a press conference alongside the presidents of SEIU, UTLA and AALA. UTLA President Cecily Myart-Cruz thanked Bass for “showing leadership in the struggle.” LA County Federation of Labor President Yvonne Wheeler spoke with chilling candor: “I want to thank Mayor Bass for being the closer to the max. We would rather be here today than on the picket line.” The officials applauded. The strike was canceled before a single picket line was formed.

The announcement of new tentative agreements at the eleventh hour was deliberate sabotage. Its purpose was to free the district’s hand to carry out its “fiscal stabilization plan” immediately after the deals were ratified.

In a statement addressed to SEIU members, the *World Socialist Web Site* warned: “The central fraud of this contract is that it conceals massive cuts just over the horizon ... 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.” The

statement urged workers to prepare a fight against both LAUSD administrators and the union apparatus by forming independent rank-and-file committees.

This warning has now been completely confirmed. The SEIU's ratification vote closed May 8, and the district released its proposed budget on May 14.

The cuts in Los Angeles are part of a national assault on public education, in which the union bureaucracy has used the same bait-and-switch method to try to suppress organized resistance from educators. In Oakland, a school board voted to eliminate 421 positions two days after a tentative agreement was signed on a 91 percent strike authorization. In San Francisco, educators struck for four days before the union shut them down; layoffs followed under a multi-year "fiscal recovery" plan.

In Chicago, massive cuts followed ratification of a deal last year. In Philadelphia, 17 public schools were voted closed last month.

The attacks are bipartisan. Cuts in almost every major school district, including LA, are being carried out by the Democrats, while at the federal level, the Trump administration is cutting billions of dollars in programs, pushing to dismantle the Department of Education entirely.

Schools are being bled dry while the Trump administration is requesting \$1.5 trillion for the military budget next year—a near-50 percent increase in a single year—while the administration simultaneously seeks to halt \$7 billion in federal public-school funding and slash the Department of Education's workforce in half.

LAUSD's Acting Superintendent Andrés Chait called the layoffs in Los Angeles "a difficult and necessary response to structural fiscal conditions." This is a flat lie. American billionaires' collective wealth stands at \$8.4 trillion—roughly nine times the country's entire annual K-12 public education expenditure. California's billionaires alone hold more than \$2 trillion. The systematic defunding of public education is a political choice, made by both parties, in the interests of the capitalist class.

SEIU's response to the layoffs it helped produce has been a petition drive—a letter-writing campaign presented as a substitute for the mass action it deliberately strangled. The same bureaucracy that called the strike cancellation an "historic victory" is now shocked that the district is proceeding with cuts.

The union is charging that LAUSD is simultaneously laying off classified employees while spending an estimated \$1 billion dollars a year on private outside contractors performing the same work—a practice it contends violates state law. But this contractor apparatus was fully visible during negotiations, and that the union accepted vague "joint task force" language in place of enforceable protections.

The experience of the past six weeks has exposed the union bureaucracy as an industry police force defending capitalism against the workers, not the other way around.

What is required is a break from the apparatus, from the Democratic Party and from the framework of austerity and war that both institutions defend. Workers in every school, bus yard, cafeteria and classroom need to build rank-and-file committees, democratically controlled and independent of the bureaucracy, to take the conduct of this struggle into their own hands.

The Los Angeles Educators Rank-and-File Committee and the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) are fighting to build exactly this—linking workers across worksites and nationally, advancing non-negotiable demands for living wages and enforceable job protections and preparing action that no midnight email can cancel.

The fight for public education in Los Angeles cannot be separated from the fight against the war economy, the financial oligarchy and the two-party system that serves it. That is the fight the working class must now prepare.



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