

More than 55,000 Los Angeles County workers set to strike

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23 April 2025

More than 55,000 Los Angeles County workers are set to walk off the job on the evening of Monday, April 28. The workers include healthcare professionals, social workers, public works personnel, clerical staff, park employees and countless other essential workers.

The workers' grievances include the county's refusal to grant wage increases that match the soaring cost of living; chronic understaffing and overwork; rampant outsourcing to private contractors that extract handsome corporate profits at the expense of workers; unsafe working conditions, especially during the pandemic; and the complete disregard for their role as frontline staff who risked and, in some cases, lost their lives to COVID-19.

The struggle is taking place in the midst of mounting opposition to Trump's authoritarian regime and his open drive to establish a presidential dictatorship. A ruthless, nationwide assault on what remains of America's social safety net is threatening all workers.

From Medicare and Social Security to education, public health and basic scientific research, every public institution that serves the working class is under siege. Immigrants are being scapegoated and deported in record numbers. Federal workers are facing sweeping layoffs. Students are being criminalized. And democratic rights are being trampled in plain sight. An all-out war on the working class is taking place, and county workers are ready to fight.

Federal cuts have also had a direct impact on local budgets for Los Angeles County, the city of Los Angeles and California at large. Reductions in federal funding have placed enormous strain on local governments already struggling to provide essential services. At the same time, the ongoing trade war has contributed significantly to rising prices for basic goods and services, exacerbating the cost-of-living crisis

across Southern California.

For these reasons, county workers have to consider their struggle as part of a broader fight by the working class against inequality, oligarchy and dictatorship.

Every step of the way, the Democrats have smoothed the path for Trump and the far right by enforcing austerity, expanding surveillance and policing, and silencing worker resistance. In Los Angeles, the very officials now attacking county workers are the pillars of the Democratic Party, which dominates California politics from top to bottom. California's Democratic Governor Gavin Newsom is making continuous overtures to Trump and the extreme right.

Workers have to contend with the Democratic Party machine itself, as well as the SEIU apparatus that acts as its loyal servant, repeatedly sabotaging workers' struggles and forcing through rotten contracts designed to preserve "labor peace" at the expense of the rank and file.

The Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 721 was pushed into filing a strike notice after an overwhelming 99 percent of members voted in favor.

But union officials limited the strike in advance to two days, while giving the county a full 10 days heads up to prepare, despite no legal obligation to do so. This makes it easier for the county to implement contingency plans and minimize disruption, significantly weakening the impact of the strike before it even begins.

According to the union, 44 unfair labor practices (ULP) have gone unanswered for six months, while county workers have been rewarded with nothing but "zeros, disrespect and broken promises," as SEIU President David Green admitted himself.

In Los Angeles County, the Board of Supervisors has proposed \$88.9 million in cuts and offered frontline

staff zero in cost-of-living adjustments, even as it throws \$205 million into shiny new downtown office towers and maintains a staggering \$7.7 billion in private contracting schemes.

LA County is facing a \$47.9 billion budget for 2025–26 that includes deep departmental cuts and the elimination of 310 vacant positions. These cuts are in part a response to a broader budget crisis involving wildfire costs, legal settlements and anticipated losses in federal aid. The crisis exposes the hollowness of the Board’s claims that there is “no money” for workers.

In 2022, Local 721 struck a sellout deal for Los Angeles County’s 55,000 workers, which offered a wage increase far below inflation, cutting real wages and locking workers into worsening conditions. Workers were furious at that betrayal.

At that time, despite a near-unanimous 98 percent strike authorization vote, the SEIU dragged its feet, only to return with an offer of a 5.5 percent raise for the first year, followed by two years of 3.25 percent increases. This was lauded by the union as “historic,” while real wages plummeted amid inflation surging to 8.5 percent in Los Angeles.

In May 2022, the same Local 721 canceled a strike planned by 7,000 Los Angeles County nurses, ramming through a “tentative agreement” that offered an equally pathetic 15 percent over three years—a contract that fell well short of both nurses’ demands and the cost-of-living crisis hammering the region.

In 2023, when 11,000 Los Angeles city workers showed their determination to strike for better wages and working conditions, the SEIU organized only a token one-day walkout. The city, like the county, kept starving its public workers while pumping billions into private contractors and police expansion.

SEIU Local 721 has endorsed two of the five County Supervisors, Janice Hahn (District 4) and Hilda Solis (District 1), describing them as pro-labor candidates. In reality, these are the very people who are now spearheading the attacks on county workers, exposing the fraudulent nature of the union’s so-called strategy.

This strike is emerging in a repressive social climate: an LA County budget that cuts millions from social programs—including homelessness services—while opening new doors for corporate profiteering. The same Board of Supervisors, which pretends its hands are tied on wage increases, found endless resources to bankroll

developers, tech companies and the Sheriff’s Department.

The attack on LA County workers is part of a broader offensive against the working class nationwide. Under Trump, public employees have been laid off by the tens of thousands. Immigrants are being deported at record rates. Entire communities are being destabilized by skyrocketing rents, stagnant wages and decaying public infrastructure.

This is a political fight, not a legal or local dispute, and it cannot be won under the leadership of the SEIU. The experiences of 2022 and 2023 confirm this. The union will seek to isolate the 55,000 county workers, divide them department by department and ultimately present another rotten deal as a “victory.”

Workers must take the struggle into their own hands. This means building rank-and-file committees—independent, democratic bodies controlled by the workers, not the union bureaucracy.

These committees must fight first and foremost to defeat fascism and dictatorship. The struggle for wage increases, safe staffing and secure jobs is inseparable from the fight to defend social programs, immigrants and democratic rights. The logical development is a joint struggle toward a general strike with other sectors under attack: logistics, auto, healthcare, education, entertainment and retail.

It’s time to turn this strike from a managed “protest” into a real fight—part of a broader, conscious movement of the working class against inequality, oligarchy and the threat of dictatorship. The fight of LA County workers must become the fight of all workers.



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