

Materials

1. What happens if the contract expires FAQ
2. Strike Q&A
3. 9 things you can do to prepare for a strike

What happens if the contract expires FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions regarding the Expiration of a Union Contract

What happens if the contract expires?

The impact is very limited. The law basically requires management to maintain the status quo and prevents changes in workers' wages, hours, and working conditions – including leaves such as vacation, sick time, and personal days. Management cannot unilaterally change any of these items simply because the contract expires.

If we don't reach an agreement, is it possible for the Universities to force changes to our wages, hours, and working conditions?

Yes. Under Oregon law, the parties must engage in mediation for a minimum of 15 days before either party may declare impasse. After we reach a formal impasse at the bargaining table and satisfy a 30-day cooling-off period, management would be able to implement their final contract offer and the union would be released to go on strike after a vote of the membership. We are not at this point yet and will continue to negotiate in good faith in hopes of reaching a fair agreement.

What protections do I have against unfair treatment if the contract expires?

The contract's just cause provision, which protects us against unfair discipline and discharge, remains in effect after the expiration of the contract. In some circumstances, you may also have protection under other State laws.

What happens to my health care if the contract expires?

It will continue as is. Health care is part of your benefits and management cannot unilaterally change or stop paying for health care while bargaining continues to progress.

What happens to our ability to file grievances or arbitrations on events that occur after the contract expires?

The grievance and arbitration procedures are some of the few items that are affected by the expiration of the contract. Management would not be obligated to accept new grievances or

arbitrations during this period. However, if the events or dispute at issue took place before the contract expired, management would have to follow the grievance arbitration process even if the grievance was filed after the contract expired.

What happens to grievances or arbitrations that have already been filed?

They will continue forward unaffected.

If you have questions that were not covered here, contact your union steward or call the SEIU Member Resource Center at 1.877.772.6551

Strike Q&A

If we decide to Strike: Q&A for Higher Ed Members

Why are we preparing for a strike?

After years of cuts and reduced funding, in 2019, the Oregon Legislature increased funding to the Public University Support Fund by \$100 million to a record \$837 Million. Despite that backdrop, management's current proposal includes half-step freezes and only a 0.5% COLA during the first year of our contract and another 0.5% during the last six months of our contract.

There is room to chop from the top. Presidents of Oregon's largest public universities are paid more than \$600,000 a year, more than six times as much as Oregon's governor, dozens of administrators make over \$500,000, and almost 200 people make over \$200,000 a year. Oregon public universities report 5.43 workers per supervisor. Ratios this low are a sign of administrative bloat and indicate opportunities to save costs by cutting overhead.

We are not in a recession. Funding for Higher Education is not being cut. There is no reason why the Universities should be proposing cuts to our compensation.

What can I do now to avoid a strike?

Continue to show solidarity with your coworkers, participate in workplace and regional actions, and sign a strike pledge to give our bargaining team the power to win the best contract possible.

What happens next?

Once either party declares impasse, each side has a week to submit a final offer before the start of a month-long "cooling off" period. Following that Management is free to impose the terms of their final offer on us and we are free to strike. If no settlement is reached, union members will vote on whether to strike.

Will bargaining continue during strike preparations?

We are prepared to bargain at any time, even during strike planning and preparation.

Who decides to conduct a strike?

You do. Our bargaining team, once given authorization by the elected bargaining delegates, will make the decision to call for a strike vote, and all members will have the right to vote on the decision. If a strike occurs, the bargaining team would also make the decision to call for a vote of the membership to end the strike.

Who can vote?

All members in good standing.

Who can strike?

All represented employees of the seven public universities covered under our collective bargaining agreement are strike-eligible.

How long would a strike last?

We will decide. In the past, strikes have been relatively brief, lasting for one week or less. Any decision to return to work will be made by the membership, hopefully as a result of a fair settlement.

If the strike lasts long enough will there be strike benefits?

Yes, but they won't match short-term salary loss. Each month, \$1 per dues payer is placed in a Strike and Job Protection Fund with 30 cents allotted solely to pay benefits in the event of a strike. Prior to a strike, the Board of Directors can allocate a portion of the fund for a strike benefit and a statewide Strike Hardship Committee determines the amount of this benefit for members on strike for at least 7 days who walk the picket line or participate in other designated strike activities. The committee also administers a personal assistance fund for employees who need additional assistance.

Locals or individual worksites can also host events to raise strike funds, including food drives and bake sales. These events help show the universities that we are serious.

Are all members expected to picket?

Yes. It is essential that we have strong picket lines throughout our strike to keep people from crossing our lines and to allow other unions and allies to support our strike. Strike benefits and hardship aid are only available to members who show up on the picket lines. Accommodations will be made for members with disabilities that prevent them from walking a picket line.

What happens if a represented worker crosses our picket line?

While the law allows unions to sanction members for anti-union activity, and this has been done in rare occasions, this has never been an effective way to organize strike support. We would do all we could to convince fellow workers that it is in their best interests now and in the future to honor the line until a fair settlement is reached.

What about health insurance during a strike?

Employees must work a minimum of 80 hours in a pay period to qualify for insurance benefits

for the following month. Once members authorize a strike, part of the strategy in setting the strike date includes ensuring that full-time workers can complete their 80 hours for insurance eligibility. Part-time workers who walk the picket line can apply for hardship benefits to assist with COBRA payments to maintain insurance coverage.

Can I use accrued vacation and sick leave during a strike?

No, workers cannot use leave or accrue leave during a strike.

How will the strike affect retirement benefits and seniority?

Strike time is treated as unpaid leave. Strikers do not receive retirement benefits or seniority credit when they are on strike.

Can strikers get unemployment benefits while on strike?

No. You are not eligible to receive unemployment benefits while on strike.

Can anyone be fired or replaced for striking?

You cannot be disciplined for participating in a lawful strike. Although the law allows the employer to permanently replace striking workers, it has not happened in previous public sector strikes and we would not return to work without protecting all workers as part of the strike settlement.

Won't a strike play into their hands by saving management money?

A strike is our collective statement of power and purpose. We are taking the power out of the State's hands and standing together to demand fair treatment. The money that management saves doesn't make up for the power they lose when we stand united.

Overview of Process to Determine a Strike:

Bargaining Team calls for vote: Once given authorization by bargaining delegates, our bargaining team calls for a strike vote based on what's happening at the bargaining table.

Strike Vote: If a strike authorization vote is called for by our bargaining team, we will hold meetings on each campus and have a process for absentee voting if members can't make the meetings.

Decision time: If members authorize a strike, the bargaining team has the ability to call a strike based on meeting the required timelines under the law which includes both sides laying out final offers and a "cooling off" period. The bargaining team will only call a strike if they believe our striking will result in a better settlement.

9 Ways to Prepare for a Strike

Sometimes withholding our labor is the best strategy to win a fair contract. Although few people like to strike, it may become necessary. It does not have to be financially devastating if we all stick together and learn from the experience of others. The important thing is to maintain our solidarity and to be prepared.

9 Things You Can Do To Prepare For A Strike:

1. Begin immediately to save money. Lots of small savings can build up to a significant amount. Brown bag it to work instead of eating out. Don't stop for that latte at the coffee bar. Vacation locally rather than take a trip. Wash your own car. Hold off on big purchases until the contract is settled.
2. If we strike, inform your creditors (credit cards, mortgage company, loan office). Creditors greatly appreciate knowing this and consider such advance warning to be the act of a responsible debtor. Don't keep them in the dark.
3. All SEIU members have access to Union Plus benefits. Check out the services provided through Union Plus that help during a strike (note, many benefits apply only after a prolonged strike): <http://www.unionplus.org/life-planning-services-legal/strike-benefits>
4. Meet with your co-workers to make a plan for raising money for the hardship fund using the ideas below—or create your own ideas.
5. Go as a group to change your W-4 form. Let personnel or payroll know why.
6. Set up a "Strike Support Food Bank" drop box in your break room. If we don't strike, contribute the food to the Oregon Food Bank.
7. Involve your family. If your spouse, child, father, or friend is a member of another Union, ask them to approach their Union for a donation to the strike fund. Send a delegation.
8. Set up a child care bank so people can look after each other's kids while they're on the picket line.
9. Ask for solidarity. If there are SEIU members in your area who are prohibited from joining our strike (i.e. private non-profit or county workers) because they are under a different contract, ask them what they are willing to do to support the strike.

Above All, Use Your Imagination!

HARDSHIP FUND

How do I get support when I'm on strike?

As negotiations with the administration stall, we are starting to prepare to go on strike. In preparation for the strike vote, SEIU's board has approved a \$500,000 "hardship fund" to support union members who are going on strike. The Board has also made strike benefit funds available.

Strike Benefit Fund: During a strike, members are eligible for a stipend of \$300 for every seven days they are on strike, starting on the 8th day of a strike. This is meant to prevent any financial disruption from being off the job.

- \$300 weekly stipend, becomes active on the 8th day of the strike.
- You must be an active member in good standing and complete strike duties as defined by the strike captain to qualify, and members get a full week's stipend even if the strike ends before end of the week.

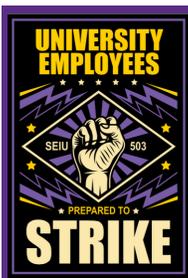
For example: If a member is out on strike for 8 days, they could apply to their strike captain and qualify for the weekly stipend. A strike lasting 7 days or less would not qualify for the stipend.

Strike Hardship Assistance: A strike would most likely impact your November 1 paycheck. In addition to the weekly stipend, the SEIU Local 503 Board of Directors allocated \$500,000 to a hardship fund to support workers who receive a reduced paycheck as a result of the strike.

- Members may apply to get reimbursed for lost pay.
- There is no set amount or limit. Reimbursement will be done on a case-by-case basis.
- Applications will be available when the first impacted paycheck is received (timing depends on when a strike is called) and close 15 days after the last impacted paycheck (most likely November 15).
- To qualify, a member must lose pay as a result of the strike, be a member in good standing, and complete strike duties as certified by picket leaders and staff strike area coordinators.

For example: If a member is out on strike for 8 days and is not paid for those 8 days, they could apply for hardship assistance. The Hardship Committee will review applications and award reimbursement on a case-by-case basis.

Sub-Local Hardship Assistance: Sub-locals with hardship committees/funds of their own should be the second line of assistance for workers seeking hardship funds while on strike. Their criteria will be the same as the 503 hardship fund.



WHO IS MY ORGANIZER?

EMAIL
HIGHEREDORGANIZERS@SEIU503 TO
GET PLUGGED IN!

