

## **SEIU Local 140 Newsletter 12.1.23**

### **Take Action!**

- Add your name to the [vote of no confidence](#) in Superintendent Guerrero
- Sign our [strike pledge!](#)
- [RSVP: The District That Stole "Christmas" \(PPS Holiday Event\) : Blackthorn : Events](#)
- [RSVP](#) for the upcoming bargaining session 12/11

## **Union Updates**

### **Bargaining Update**

After canceling bargaining on the 27th, the PPS bargaining team nearly canceled bargaining again on the 30th, claiming that they still had to discuss with the board how much money they had available in the wake of the teachers strike. As usual, the district is trying to divide the unions and make it seem like there is not enough money to pay all their workers living wages. Instead of bargaining over our contract, we met on Thursday to discuss the impacts of the additional student days the district has added to the calendar. We were able to sign a letter of agreement (LOA) with the district to clarify our rights given the change in our schedules.

Nutrition service workers are permitted to request unpaid time off during the week of December 18th as long as they follow normal procedures for requesting time off and explain that they had prearranged vacation plans. We recommend calling in as soon as possible if you have not done so already. Whitney has agreed that workers will not be punished for taking time off that week if they already had plans. The district sick leave policies will also apply and nutrition service employees can choose to take paid sick leave or take unpaid time for qualifying absences.

The LOA also clarifies that the President's Day holiday will be replaced with a paid holiday on March 25th. This means all employees will work their usual shift on President's Day and March 25th will be a paid, non-work day.

We have an additional bargaining date scheduled for December 11th from 1-5pm at SEIU (525 NE Oregon St). PPS has failed to provide any other bargaining dates for the month of December. We have our first bargaining session with the state mediator on January 18th. PFSP will also begin mediation on January 17th which puts us on a very similar timeline to potentially strike if we are unable to reach an agreeable settlement.

## **Local Solidarity**

### **Teachers Ratify Contract**

Teachers in PPS concluded their strike this week, [approving](#) a new contract by a significant margin. The new [contract](#) includes 6.25% raises in the first year, followed by 4.5% and 3%. The teachers also won additional planning time. While they did not win hard class size caps or guarantees of safe building conditions, they did win language for safety committees and committees to address overloaded classrooms.

The success of the teacher strike demonstrated the power of unity and solidarity in standing up to a district that is out of touch with the interests of its students and employees. Hopefully this can be the start of a larger movement to hold the district accountable while simultaneously examining how education is funded on the state and federal levels going forward. Governor Kotek announced that she planned to examine the state's education funding system, suggesting that the strike also influenced the political conversation around education finances on a broader level.

Meanwhile, at the board meeting to ratify the contract, board members continued to try to avoid blame for the strike while students condemned the lack of transparency and collaboration by the board. Rather than take responsibility for his own role in prolonging the strike, Board Chair Gary Hollands [stated](#), "I just want to thank our board for really being unwavering in the face of intimidation, in the face of harassment, Trump-like tactics that was used." Other board members also shared concerns about their personal safety during the strike while Andrew Scott [claimed](#) that PPS got a contract "we cannot afford."

The strike also exposed the way in which corporate interests have influenced the school board and our society as a whole. Julia Brim-Edwards, a school board member, Multnomah county commissioner, and former lobbyist for the Nike corporation, constantly held up the negotiations by pushing back on the union's key priorities. It's worth looking at an [article from KBOO](#) describing the ways that groups such as the Portland Metro Chamber (formerly the Portland Business Alliance) have pushed anti-worker and anti-union narratives and have influenced the broader political landscape of our city.

The Portland Metro Chamber, a trade group which lobbies for the interests of numerous corporations that do business in the city, wrote an [open letter](#) encouraging the district and PAT to continue negotiating. Their letter cited their support for the Student Success Act, but ignored the fact that they had lobbied to include certain loopholes reducing corporate tax obligations in the legislation. Julia Brim-Edwards was a key lobbyist in this effort working in her role at Nike and also having served as a previous board member for the Portland Metro Chamber. The Chamber recently [honored](#) her during a gala and awards ceremony sponsored by the massive bank and financial services company Wells Fargo and oil giant Chevron among others.

In addition to attacking teachers' unions, the business association has also come out against the Multnomah County Preschool For All program which seeks to provide early learning opportunities

funded by a tax on high income earners. It is important to expose the powerful corporate interests that are often behind these attempts to undermine and privatize our remaining public services. We must use our power as workers to stand up for our right to a quality public education system and refuse to give into the myth that we do not have the resources. It is unacceptable that we should live in a society where crowded classrooms, unsafe buildings, and underpaid staff are the norm in our public schools. PAT has taken a strong stand in building an alternative and it is up to all of us to continue this momentum.

## **Salem-Keizer Public Schools Unions Request Mediation, District Announces Cuts**

Salem-Keizer Public Schools has [announced](#) around \$70 million in budget cuts as the district heads into mediation with both the Salem-Keizer Education Association which represents teachers and ASK ESP which represents the district's classified staff. Superintendent Andrea Castañeda issued a statement that explained the cuts as the result of Oregon's "archaic and inequitable" system for allocating resources to schools. While there may be some truth to this, public school districts and other public institutions such as transit agencies and libraries must also be more transparent and democratic in how they use our collective funds. Look for more updates about labor struggles in other districts around the state in future issues.

## **International Solidarity**

### **Unions Support Palestine**

As Israel continues its genocidal war against Palestine, the labor movement is amplifying calls for a ceasefire and an end to Israeli occupation. After a 7-day truce expired on Friday, Israel immediately resumed its assault, killing dozens of civilians throughout the Gaza strip including in the south which had previously been designated as safe for civilians fleeing from the north. Israel has repeatedly targeted hospitals, schools, civilian infrastructure and homes and continues to severely limit access to food, water, fuel, and medical supplies as the World Health Organization [warns](#) that more people could die of disease than have already been killed if Gaza's health system is not repaired. Over 15,000 Palestinians, including over 6,000 children, have been killed in just under 2 months.

On November 11, local unions including New Seasons Labor Union ([NSLU](#)), Parkrose Faculty Association, and Oregon Federation of Nurses and Health Practitioners ([OFNHP](#)) helped organize a [rally](#) in support of a ceasefire. Other local unions to publicly call for a ceasefire include [ILWU Local 5](#), Starbucks Workers United ([SBWU](#)), and the Portland Association of Teachers. Several [SEIU locals](#) have also joined the growing calls for a [ceasefire](#) including Local 1021 in California and 509 in Massachusetts.

Despite massive popular support for a ceasefire, SEIU as a whole has remained silent on the issue. Staff and members of SEIU are circulating a [petition](#) demanding that union leadership call for an end to the genocide of Palestinians, the siege of Gaza, and US military aid to Israel, as well publicly declaring support for the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement initiated by Palestinian trade unions.