MOBILIZE UAW MEMBERS AND ALL WORKERS BEHIND THE STRIKING UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA ACADEMIC WORKERS!



BY WILL LEHMAN
Mack Trucks worker and rank-and-file candidate for UAW president

As candidate for president of the United Auto Workers, I express my full support and solidarity with the 48,000 academic workers who went on strike today. I will do everything in my power to make your struggle known among UAW members and other workers across the country and internationally, and to mobilize the support of the working class behind your critical battle.

You have taken a courageous stand against the corporate and politically connected forces that run the University of California system. The struggle unites 12,000 postdoctoral and academic researchers in Local 5810; 19,000 tutors, readers and graduate student instructors and assistants in Local 2865; and 17,000 grad students in the Student Researchers United (SRU-UAW), which was just recognized in December.

Your demands for raises that keep up with surging housing, food, fuel, medical and other expenses resonate with workers in my factory, the Mack Trucks plant in Macungie, Pennsylvania, and workers throughout the auto and other industries. You live in one of the most expensive states in the US, and many of you struggle to afford daily necessities, including rent and childcare, and are forced to skip meals.

Your fight is not just a trade union struggle, but a political fight against both corporate-controlled parties. At its center is the question: Who will determine how society's resources are distributed?

I am a socialist. I insist that trillions of dollars be redeployed to finance public and post-secondary schooling. Free, high-quality university education must be guaranteed for all, *and* a genuinely decent, livable income provided to university workers. I call for an end to corporate tax cuts, bank bailouts and military spending for wars against Russia and China, which threaten to spiral into a nuclear Armageddon.

It is a complete lie for Democratic Governor Gavin Newsom and the UC Board of Regents to claim there is no money to provide you with living wages and other necessities. The assets of the UC system—the largest public university in the world—stand at $152.3 billion as of the end of the 2021-2022 academic year, according to the UC Office of the President.

California is home to some of the largest corporations and richest people on the planet. Over the last four decades, however, both Democrats and Republicans have cut the tax rate for the Silicon Valley, Hollywood and other corporate giants in half, from 9.5 percent in 1981 to just 4.8 percent in 2019, the most recent year data are available. According to the California Budget and Policy Center, the $14 billion lost in yearly tax revenue is more than the state spends on the University of California, California State University and student aid combined.

But appeals for "justice" directed at Governor Newsom and the Board of Regents are worse than useless. A look at just a few regents shows the board is a gang of corporate executives and

Democratic Party operatives who have spent years slashing public spending and funneling money to big business.

This includes:

- Maria Anguiano, executive vice president of Arizona State University's Learning Enterprise. Appointed in 2017 by former Democratic Governor Jerry Brown—a champion of school privatization—Anguiano is the former chief financial officer for the "ed-tech startup Minerva Project," a senior adviser at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and financial officer at Barclays Capital and Deloitte.
- Ana Matosantos, appointed by Governor Newsom in July 2022, was director of California Department of Finance in both the Brown and Schwarzenegger administrations, where she oversaw the slashing of billions in public spending after the 2008 financial crash. She was also appointed by President Obama to serve on the seven-member Puerto Rico Oversight, Management and Economic Stability Board, which has imposed a brutal program of austerity and privatization on the US-controlled territory.
- Howard "Peter" Guber, current CEO of Mandalay Entertainment group and former chief executive of Sony Entertainment, Columbia Pictures and Polygram Entertainment. Guber, whose net worth is reportedly just shy of $1 billion, is also co-owner of the Golden State Warriors basketball and Los Angeles Dodgers baseball teams.

The rest of the regents are highly paid real estate developers, financiers, political lobbyists and union bureaucrats, including former Democratic Party Assembly Speaker John Perez, who was the political director for the California Federation of Labor.

Make no mistake about it: academic workers are engaged in a fight against the Democratic Party, which controls every level of state government, from the governor's mansion and both houses of the state legislature, to the UC Board of Regents.

The Democrats specialize in using identity politics and their close relations with the corrupt union bureaucracy to posture as champions of minorities, immigrants and low-income workers. But the Democrats are no less ruthless defenders of the corporate and financial oligarchy that rules America than the Republicans. The Biden administration has already deported more asylum seekers than Trump and is rapidly escalating the US-NATO proxy war against Russia in Ukraine.

These may be powerful enemies, but striking UC academic workers have allies that have the potential to be far more powerful.

More than 110,000 railway workers and 22,000 dockworkers on the West Coast want to strike to oppose exhausting work schedules, the lack of paid sick days, the attack on jobs and years of stagnating paychecks that are now being eaten up by raging inflation. In both cases, however, the union bureaucracy is collaborating with the Biden administration to block strikes, which would become a catalyst for a powerful counteroffensive by the working class against austerity and social inequality.

In Wisconsin and Iowa, over 1,000 CNH farm and construction equipment manufacturing workers in the UAW have been striking for more than six months to reverse years of concessions. In New York City, 250 workers, members of UAW Local 2110, are striking against the Murdoch-owned publishing giant HarperCollins to demand wages to keep up with the city's skyrocketing housing costs and other living expenses. Hundreds of UAW academic workers at the New School in New York City have just voted by 97 percent to strike, and hundreds more social service workers at Heartland Alliance in Chicago, members of UAW Local 2320, have been working without a contract since this summer.

These struggles are part of a global movement of the working class, including 55,000 school support workers in the Canadian province of Ontario who defied an anti-strike decree by Premier Doug Ford earlier this month. Facing growing demands for a

general strike, the union bureaucracy held secret talks with Prime Minister Trudeau to end the strike and save the hated Ford government.

Everywhere I have traveled in the US during my campaign, workers have told me that they want to fight, but that they are blocked by union officials who are "in bed with management" and allow the companies to run roughshod over workers' rights and needs.

My campaign is calling for the abolition of the pro-corporate UAW apparatus and the transfer of power to rank-and-file workers, who are the ones who produce the wealth and pay the dues. I am assisting workers in building rank-and-file committees in the factories and other workplaces that will demand that all negotiations be live-streamed and that the full resources of the UAW be mobilized to win strikes. Committees have already been formed at Ford Chicago Assembly, GM Flint Assembly and Stellantis' (Chrysler) Detroit Assembly-Mack plant, which are putting forward demands based on what workers actually need, not what the corporate elite and their political representatives claim is "affordable."

Workers paid our hard-earned wages into the UAW strike fund, which now stands at $826 million, and I insist that striking workers in the UC system, HarperCollins and CNH Industrial be paid their full income and benefits for the duration of their struggles. This will send a powerful message to the employers that workers will stay out until their demands are fully met.

The UAW bureaucracy has imposed a virtual news blackout on your struggle. In a perfunctory four-sentence statement posted on the UAW's website today—the first mention of your struggle by the UAW nationally—current UAW President Ray Curry (annual compensation, $272,000) claimed to "stand with" striking UC workers. But this is totally hypocritical and insincere, given that Curry and the UAW's ruling "Administration Caucus" pushed through a reversal in the vote to raise weekly strike pay at the UAW's convention this summer, lowering it from $500 to $400.

I stand by the age-old principle of the labor movement that "An injury to one is an injury to all!" My campaign will do everything to inform UAW members about this fight and mobilize support behind you.

Contact my campaign today at willforuawpresident@gmail.com to discuss starting a rank-and-file committee, and to share why you're striking. I also urge you to vote for me for UAW International president, and mail in your ballot by November 18!

JOIN THE FIGHT FOR WORKERS' POWER!

Get involved with the rank-and-file campaign in the UAW elections.

willforuawpresident.org/get-involved