

RAUNER REFUSES ANY COMPROMISE STRIKE AUTHORIZATION VOTE SET

How did Rauner respond to the significant modification to the union's previous positions that AFSCME put forward as a new settlement framework on January 11, 2017?

Rauner immediately rejected AFSCME's efforts to move the bargaining process forward—refusing to return to negotiations and insisting that he intends to move forward with imposing his own terms. His characterization of the union's willingness to make such significant changes as “superficial” was an insult to every state employee. It demonstrates all too clearly that he is seeking to foment conflict rather than work toward a constructive resolution of this contract dispute.

What is the union's response to the governor's insistence on imposing his own terms?

The next step is to take a strike authorization vote that will give the AFSCME Bargaining Committee the authority to call a strike. Rauner seems to think that he can bully employees into accepting his terms rather than going out on strike. We don't want a strike, but we don't want to let him undermine our economic security and our basic rights on the job. We know if a strike does occur, the responsibility lies solely with the governor.

Why isn't the governor moving forward to impose right now?

AFSCME is appealing the Labor Board's finding of impasse in state court. The union has asked the court to issue a “stay” that would halt any imposition while the case is pending. The motion for a “stay” that would be in place throughout the appeal process has not yet been heard, but the court has issued a temporary “stay” that is forcing Rauner to hold off on imposing for now.

Why is Rauner only citing three issues—hours of work, anti-violence task force, and ‘no drug impairment’—when he talks about imposing his terms on employees?

Rauner thinks those issues sound reasonable to the public. He doesn't want anyone to know that he also intends to impose economic terms that would cost the average state employee \$10,000, that would wipe out protections against irresponsible privatization, that would let him mandate employees to work 16 hours straight without getting any overtime pay, and that would weaken other workplace protections.

What is a strike authorization vote?

It is a vote on whether to give your Bargaining Committee the authority to call a strike. If a majority of members vote to authorize a strike, that doesn't necessarily mean there will be a strike. The Bargaining Committee will continue to do everything possible to find an alternative path to resolve the contract dispute. However, it does mean that if those efforts do not succeed and the Bargaining Committee issues a call for a strike, then members will be prepared to respond.

Why is the vote being held at this time?

The “stay” issued by the state court that is currently preventing Rauner from imposing his extreme terms on employees could be lifted at any time with no advance notice. If it is lifted, Rauner had made clear that he intends to immediately begin imposing his extreme terms on all employees. It's important for the AFSCME Bargaining Committee to know if employees are prepared to strike if there's no other means left to block the governor's assaults on our standard of living and our workplace rights.

What will union members be voting on?

The ballot will simply ask each member to vote YES/NO as to whether to authorize the AFSCME Bargaining Committee to call a strike.

How will this vote be conducted?

Every AFSCME member who is eligible to strike is eligible to vote on whether to authorize the Bargaining Committee to call a strike. Voting will take place over the course of three weeks beginning on January 30. The voting will be by secret ballot and appropriate procedures will be in place to safeguard the integrity of the voting process. Each local union will set specific dates/times/places when its members will be able to vote. All votes will be tallied at a central location at the conclusion of the voting process.

What is a strike?

A strike is a legal form of work stoppage in which union-represented employees walk off their jobs as a last resort effort to secure a fair contract. Strikes are called only when all efforts to negotiate a fair contract have failed and employees are left with no reasonable alternative. Many different types of employees—teachers, airline pilots, auto workers, phone company workers, and others—have had to resort to strikes in order to protect their standard of living or their rights on the job.

Would a strike in state government be legal?

Yes. With the exception of police, firefighters, and security employees, public employees have a legally protected right to strike without fear of termination or other reprisals. The Union has top flight attorneys. If there is a strike, it will be a lawful one, and employees' legal right to strike will be protected. The Rauner Administration says its Tolling Agreement with AFSCME contains a no-strike clause. But the governor refuses to honor the agreement and is in court claiming it is no longer in effect. That's the basis of his claim that he can impose his terms on employees. If the governor will agree to honor the terms of the Tolling Agreement and not impose his terms, then a strike can be avoided. But the governor can't legally have it both ways. Either the Tolling Agreement is in effect or it isn't.

Can striking employees be permanently replaced?

The Administration could not replace even a small fraction of 28,000 skilled, knowledgeable, and dedicated employees. There are many lengthy procedural requirements that must be met before someone can be hired as a permanent state employee. And it takes months just to get a grade before someone can even be considered.

Can employees be temporarily replaced during a strike?

The great majority of important and necessary jobs that AFSCME members perform cannot be performed by someone else without years of experience. There are very few state positions which someone from the outside can just step in and do even if they meet the basic qualifications for the job.