

AFD 256 Notes and Links LA Teacher Strike and India Strike

- LA Teacher Strike

- <https://www.latimes.com/local/education/la-me-edu-laUSD-teachers-strike-negotiations-20190119-story.html>

From the union's perspective, the strike has been nearly an unqualified success — so far. Members of the public have identified strongly with teachers and their descriptions of overcrowded classrooms and schools without nurses and other support staff on hand every day.

Charter schools now enroll about 1 in 5 district students and are popular with many families. They also have wealthy supporters, including some who strongly back Beutner, but would question his leadership if he gave away what they considered to be too much in negotiations.

The union wants a moratorium on new charter schools. When district students enroll in charters, L.A. Unified loses the attendance-based funding that goes with them. Staff at charter schools also mostly are non-union.

- <https://www.thenation.com/article/los-angeles-teachers-strike-utla-organizing-solidarity/>

Four days into the United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA) strike, the picket lines are working like well-oiled machines—and the groundwork that union reformers put into reshaping a massive organization into a fighting union, one that has taken over the city with mass rallies and pickets, is showing. So is the work the union has put into building community alliances, as parents, students, and community groups continue to organize solidarity actions that include visits to the homes of school-board members and charter-school funders. The UTLA strike, which leadership has called “a battle for the soul of public education,” at this point looks to be a model for how to keep public-sector unions strong in the age of [*Janus Janus v. American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees*](#).

The story of UTLA's rebuilding goes back to the 2008 financial crisis and recession, when mass layoffs rocked the district. “If you look at our teaching population, between ages 27–32, there are no teachers, because they were getting pink-slipped every single year,” says Emerson Middle School teacher [Noriko Nakada](#). She and a group of others, including UTLA's current president, Alex Caputo-Pearl, who taught at Emerson then, organized a one-hour work stoppage and civil disobedience in protest of the cutbacks.

That moment, she says, was when Caputo-Pearl, Cecily Myart-Cruz (now UTLA/NEA vice president) and others began to get serious about reforming the union and formed the Union Power caucus. “They already were huge union activists,” Nakada says, “but the union wasn't doing what they wanted the union to do.” When, several years later, the Caucus of Rank-and-File Educators took power in the Chicago Teachers Union, and then led a successful 2012 strike, the Union Power crew was inspired to kick into high gear—and has been building with CTU and other union reformers ever since.

[Caputo-Pearl] really lights up when asked to talk about the reforms his caucus has brought to UTLA since it was elected in 2014 on the promise to institute an organizing department, a political department, a research department, and a parent/community division. The union even managed to get teachers to vote to increase their own union dues in order to make those things happen.

UTLA organized to get teachers to re-up their membership before the decision dropped, so when the school year started, they weren't scrambling to maintain membership and instead presented a united front during bargaining. "Being able to do that kind of organizing that far in advance has really helped lay the ground for what you are seeing here," she says. "People were already buying in post-*Janus* and seeing the value of the union."

What's known in union circles as "bargaining for the common good"—the idea of introducing demands in collective bargaining that benefit the community as a whole, not just the union's membership—has been a way not just to revitalize stagnant unions but to reinvigorate interest in the public sector as a whole. It also means that when teachers take to the streets, they have parents willing not just to join them, but to take risks of their own.

"For the strike, it has helped us immensely having this on-the-ground leadership of rank and file in each area," he explains. "All the stuff that we are able to do right now when we have to do it, pushing information out to members, getting immediate response from members about how people are feeling, pushing stuff out to parents, getting immediate feedback from parents—it is because of years of setting down systems and structures."

Proposition 13, the [1978 California initiative that capped property taxes](#) at 1 percent of a property's assessed value

The cost of living has gone up nearly as fast as his class size, but the union is called greedy for asking for a 6 percent raise in this contract—when Page can identify 20 or so teachers just at his school who drive for Lyft or Uber on the side. Since the start of his career, even if that 6 percent raise comes, Page says, he's going to have effectively lost 10 percent of his wages just to increases in the cost of living in LA. "At some point, something has got to give."

the groups and the union managed to get an initiative on the 2020 ballot to reform Prop 13—the first such effort in years. The initiative would raise taxes on commercial and industrial properties, raising as much as [\\$11 billion a year](#), its proponents say, and boosting state education funding by 6 percent. But, Zeccola notes, the leadership of the Los Angeles Unified School District hasn't endorsed the initiative.

Within its coalition work, UTLA has also brought housing issues into bargaining, proposing that some vacant land owned by the school district be used for affordable housing. "You can't live in LA and have vacant lots and be able to go to sleep at night with a conscience if you are not working to build affordable housing for some of them," Caputo-Pearl says. It is another example of the

union's positioning itself as the defender not just of schools but also of the public good writ large.

Accelerated Schools, a group of charters who joined the strike, walking off the job in only the second charter-school strike ever. Chandler Heath, a teacher at one of the Accelerated schools, tells me, "This school is like watching somebody take a Ferrari and crash it into a wall." Teachers there, she says, are paid some \$15,000 a year less than at neighboring schools, and there is a brutal 40 percent turnover rate. Teachers have to wait until the end of the year to find out if they keep their jobs. For the Accelerated teachers to join the UTLA strike seemed a shot across the bow to the CCSA; the union is calling for a cap on charters, but it also isn't afraid to organize them.

- <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/education/2019/01/19/lausd-homeless-foo-d-la-teachers-strike-utla-update-school/2612405002/>
- <https://www.npr.org/2019/01/17/685116971/the-los-angeles-teacher-strikes-class-size-conundrum>
- Cap fourth through sixth grade classes at 35 students. (Currently, they can be as large as 39 at some schools.)
- Reduce overall middle school class sizes by two students. (Currently, they can be as high as 43.)
- Reduce overall high school class sizes by two students. (Currently, they can be as high as 46.)
- Cap middle and high school math and English class sizes at 39 students.
- <https://www.dailynews.com/2019/01/19/solidarity-forever-meet-the-ardent-socialists-throwing-their-weight-behind-the-lausd-teachers-strike/>
- <https://www.latimes.com/local/education/la-me-lausd-teachers-strike-negotiations-20190120-story.html>
- <https://www.dailynews.com/2019/01/20/lausd-teacher-strike-day-7-district-utla-locking-themselves-behind-closed-doors-again-after-11-hour-bargaining-on-saturday/>
- <https://www.commondreams.org/views/2019/01/08/heres-what-real-strike-looks-150-million-say-no-despotism-india>
- <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2019/01/india-strike-bjp-congress-party-unions>