

OPEN SHOP GAZETTE

VOLUME 2 | NOVEMBER, 2016

The following story appeared in *The Orange County Register* on November 16, 2016 and was written by Juliet Williams, an Associated Press correspondent.

“Largest public employees union authorizes strike amid talks”

“Sacramento. Members of California’s largest public employees union have voted 92 percent in favor of a strike as its members seek new labor contracts with the state, the union announced Tuesday.

The Service Employees International Union Local 1000 represents about 95,000 state employees, many of who are office and administrative workers, librarians, engineers and nurses.

Both sides have been bargaining since April and they were scheduled to resume Tuesday, the union said.

The state has offered the union a nearly 12 percent salary increase over four years, but the SEIU officials say the 3 percent annual raises would be offset by a 3.5 percent employee contribution to retirees’ health care.

“Although both parties have reached tentative agreement on many items, the state has inexplicably failed to budge from its opening proposal regarding wages for state workers,” the union said in a news release.

Union President Yvonne Walker argues that the state can afford a larger increase as the state is projected to have an \$11.5 billion rainy day fund. She also said the state has failed to address the union’s concerns about the gender wage gap. Two-thirds of the union’s members are women and a state report based on 2014 data found a 20.5 percent gender pay gap for California’s civil service employees, about the national average.

“The state has made deals with male-dominated state worker groups that include wages 43 percent higher than our average pay,” she wrote on the union’s website.

Joe DeAnda, a spokesman for the State CalHR agency, said the state will continue bargaining in good faith.

“This includes balancing recognition of our hardworking employees with protecting the long-term viability of retiree health benefits and maintaining the integrity of the state’s finances.” he said in an email.

The election of Republican Donald Trump to succeed Democratic President Barack Obama could reset the bargaining agenda. If Trump and the Republican-controlled Congress opt to repeal the federal health care law, California would lose billions of dollars a year in federal subsidies.”

