

California State Scientists Reject Tentative Agreement, Will Resume Bargaining with Newsom

Nearly 60 percent of ballots cast by California Association of Professional Scientists members were "no" votes.

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*CAPS Bargaining Committee
Chair Jacqueline Tkac*

California Association of Professional Scientists (CAPS) has announced that its members have resoundingly rejected a tentative labor agreement reached in December with Governor Gavin Newsom's administration.

The official count was 751 in favor of ratification (40.70%) and 1094 against (59.30%). Two-thirds of those eligible (1845 of 2744 rank-and-file members) participated.

"CAPS is a democratic union, and our members have spoken," said CAPS Bargaining Committee Chair Jacqueline Tkac. "So now we will return to the table with a crystal-clear

signal to the administration: You must do better by state scientists."

CAPS represents more than 5,300 California state scientists in Bargaining Unit 10. Their vital roles include protecting public health and the environment, securing the food supply, addressing climate change and ecosystem loss, and developing green energy.

Despite that important work, state scientists' wages for nearly two decades have lagged 30% or more compared to the salaries paid to counterparts in similar state, local, and federal positions. Their wages have also fallen behind those of their supervisors and managers by a similar percentage. As a result, programs are suffering because [the state struggles to retain scientists](#) for more than a few years before they move on for better pay. The constant turnover is harming vital state programs that serve Californians.

CAPS has been bargaining to close the gap for many years, including the 31 months since its last Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) expired on July 1, 2020. Salaries have been a major sticking point to reaching a successor agreement. Also high on the union's agenda: Additional

cost-of-living compensation for members in California's most expensive regions and "longevity pay" to incentivize the most experienced scientists to stay with the state.

The tentative agreement that CAPS members rejected this week provided a 4% salary increase for more than 80% of Unit 10 scientists, retroactive to November 1, 2022. The remaining employees would have received retroactive increases of 10% or 2.5%, depending on their classifications. On July 1, 2023, all Unit 10 employees in the unit would have received a 2% raise, followed by another 2% increase on the agreement's last day, July 1, 2024. [The Sacramento Bee](#) noted the salary terms fell "well short" of CAPS' agenda.

Under state law, the union's expired contract terms remain effective until a new agreement is in place. The CAPS bargaining team has notified the Department of Human Resources, which represents the Governor in labor negotiations, of the vote results and requested talks resume immediately.

ABOUT CAPS

CAPS represents roughly 5,300 state-employed scientists working in over 30 state departments in 81 scientific classifications. CAPS members protect the public from life threatening diseases, safeguard our wildlife, abundant natural resources, and food supply, and protect our air and water from toxic waste and pollution.

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