

California State Scientists Say No to Gov. Gavin Newsom's Take-It-or-Leave-It Labor Terms

Union president says governor's tactics and timing intended to "punish" members, vows to continue fight for science

SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA, UNITED STATES, December 21, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The California Association of Professional Scientists (CAPS) announced today it has rejected take-it-or-leave-it labor terms from Gov. Gavin Newsom, setting the stage for the administration to impose working conditions on the state union that recently [made history as the first to go on strike.](#)



California state scientists picket CalEPA HQ on Nov. 15, 2023.

Newsom delivered his "last, best and final offer" (LBFO) on Tuesday with a Jan. 2 deadline for CAPS to respond. Under state law, CAPS' rejection allows the governor to impose some or all of the LBFO's terms. The parties remain obligated to bargain in good faith but are also at impasse, which leaves the union free to conduct job actions that would be prohibited under the LBFO's terms if CAPS accepted it.

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CAPS President Jacqueline Tkac

Newsom is just the second governor to impose terms on state employees. The first, Arnold Schwarzenegger, implemented an LBFO on the California Correctional Peace Officers Association in 2007.

“It seems rather petty for him to do this over the holidays, but Newsom is trying to make an example of us for demanding a contract that values state scientists and our

vital work,” said CAPS President Jacqueline Tkac. “We need a serious partner at the table. Instead,

the governor is preparing to impose the same terms that prompted our members to strike. In essence, California's governor – a man who says good science shapes good public policy – is holding the door open and inviting his scientists to leave state service. How does that protect our environment, fight climate change, promote public health, or secure our food economy and natural resources?"

CAPS is one of the state's smallest unions. A majority of state scientists are women. Despite their important work, their pay for nearly 20 years has lagged the salaries paid to counterparts in similar state, local, and federal positions by 30% or more. Their wages also have fallen behind those of their supervisors and managers by a similar percentage.

CAPS' last contract ended July 1, 2020. The union continued to meet with the administration while working under the expired contract's terms. Last January, CAPS members [voted overwhelmingly to reject a proposal](#) that failed to keep pace with inflation, much less address longstanding salary inequities. Bargaining resumed, but the governor's position remained essentially unchanged.

Despite Newsom's protests, a state board ruled in October that the parties were at impasse, triggering mediation meetings that began Nov. 8. After gauging the administration's continued inflexibility, CAPS leaders called a strike, and thousands of CAPS members statewide went on strike from Nov. 15 to Nov. 17 to convey their demand that the governor take mediation seriously. It was the first time state workers walked off the job since winning collective bargaining rights through the 1977 Ralph C. Dills Act.

The parties met with a mediator several times, but the administration remained intransigent. Mediation ended without movement, opening the path for Newsom's LBFO. CAPS leaders are not asking members to vote on the LBFO because they have already rejected it twice – once with the January vote and again with last month's overwhelming strike turnout.

"The governor hasn't been serious in the three years that we have been bargaining," Tkac said. "But we're serious. We did not come this far only to accept the status quo. We will not be complicit in the state compromising its scientific programs and refusing to provide equal pay for equal work. Those are the values we're fighting for."

For more detailed information about CAPS bargaining position and Newsom's proposals, go to capscontract2023.org/proposals.

ABOUT CAPS

CAPS represents roughly 5,700 state-employed scientists (including 4,300 rank and file scientists and 1,400 supervisors and managers) working in more than 50 state departments in 137 scientific classifications. CAPS members protect Californians from life-threatening diseases; safeguard our wildlife and abundant natural resources; and protect our food supply, air and water from toxic waste and pollution. About 6 in 10 state scientists are women. Follow on X.com

and Instagram: @capsscientists.

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