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SEIU LOCAL 721 RIVERSIDE COUNTY WORKERS DECISIVELY AUTHORIZE ESCALATION UP TO AND INCLUDING STRIKE

*Strike authorization approved with 98% of voting members and the full backing of the SEIU
Local 721 Executive Board*

RIVERSIDE, CA – A 5-week long escalation vote by Riverside County employees represented by SEIU Local 721 concluded this evening with the public workers emphatically authorizing an escalation up to and including a strike with 98% voting in favor. Member leaders conducted the final ballot count at their local union hall, with dozens of member volunteers on hand to tally and check ballots from worksites spanning every major Riverside County Department from the desert communities to the City of Riverside.

The escalation authorization is the latest episode in a 10-month long bargaining process marred by Riverside County's consistently bad-faith effort to negotiate a fair contract with County workers. Since negotiations began, the County of Riverside has racked up four Unfair Labor Practice (ULP) charges ranging from withholding critical information needed by the SEIU 721 Bargaining Team, to denial of workplace access and the surveillance of County Employees participating in [a self-defense class outside of the Riverside University Hospital System Regional Medical Center](#).

Principal amongst the SEIU Local 721 Bargaining Team's priorities during negotiations is cutting the County's rampant revenue waste, raising the quality of services, restoring previously cut services, and strengthening measures to improve both public and worker safety.

The escalation authorization arrives on the heels of County employees, community advocates, and residents increasing the pressure and seeking accountability on the whopping \$119 million of taxpayer money wasted on sweetheart consulting deals and a toxic swap deal with Wells Fargo. Since the County entered a bad swap deal with Wells Fargo, the County has doled out \$48.9 million in excessive fees and is on the hook for up to \$20.5 million more until the deal ends in 2032.

"Ten months ago we began this journey in high-spirits, determined to bolster the quality services residents depend on and focused on cutting the revenue waste that's draining millions in taxpayer dollars," said Riverside University Hospital Respiratory Therapist and Bargaining Team Member Leanne Welch.

"The County's bad-faith efforts show they've never had a genuine intention to work with us to make the necessary investments in crucial departments like our hospitals. While the County proposes reckless cuts at the bargaining table, patient wait times at Emergency Rooms and health clinics have skyrocketed."

"We remain united in our demand that the County stop shortchanging our frontline services and quit giving away our tax dollars to Wall Street. We are willing and ready to strike to make this a reality," she adds.

Today's escalation authorization represents an important step in the County employees' ongoing fight to defend and restore the vital frontline services residents rely on. While County leadership has continued to propose thoughtless cuts to offset their gross financial mismanagement, employees today sent a clear message that they are willing to do whatever it takes to protect quality services for County residents.

This evening's escalation vote green lights a strike at a moment's notice if the County continues on their current path.

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