

AFSCME Council 32: Red Cross workers prepare to strike holiday blood drive

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Madison, WI – On Monday night, employees of the American Red Cross's six Wisconsin facilities voted to initiate a strike during the region's largest blood drive should management fail to reach an agreement with them before their current contract expires on December 15th. The AFSCME employees' union specified, in a notice sent to the employer today, that the strike will protest management's unfair labor practices (ULPs) and their ongoing refusal to bargain in good faith.

These employees, the members of AFSCME Locals 1205 and 1558, have been trying to negotiate a collective bargaining agreement since August of 2021. After several months, management had canceled or rescheduled 21 meetings and had attended only one—after the employees filed their first ULP charge. They began holding regular meetings this past summer the workers filed a second charge. By then, company officials were claiming that—during their months of not scheduling meetings—they had spent all available funds to significantly increase wages on their employees in other states like Minnesota and Illinois who saw significant wage increases not being offered in Wisconsin. The workers ultimately filed a third charge containing a larger list of ULPs in September of this year.

“For sixteen months, management at Red Cross in Wisconsin has refused to negotiate in good faith with their employees,” AFSCME Council 32 Executive Director Patrick Wycoff said. “When they finally came to the table, they told the employees that there was no money left for them because they spent it all on raises for workers in other states. These unfair labor practices have forced the workers into a position where their only choice is to strike, and our union will stand with them.”

“After exhausting all attempts to bargain in good faith with our employer,” said Kristena Schmitz, President of Local 1205 from Green Bay, “we are left with no other option but to withhold our labor. If we don’t reach an agreement by December 15th, we will not be working the holiday blood drive on December 23rd.”

The strike will take place between 5:00 AM and 10:00 PM on Friday, December 23rd. The employees will form a picket line outside Red Cross’s 37th annual Holiday Blood Drive at the Alliant Energy Center in Madison and ask all public allies to join Wisconsin’s Red Cross workers in solidarity.