

AFL-CIO: Stands in solidarity as AFSCME Red Cross workers in Wisconsin prepare for possible holiday strike

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On December 5, workers 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 union members before the current contract expires on December 15th.

"The Wisconsin labor movement proudly stands in solidarity with AFSCME Locals 1205 and 1558 as they prepare to strike on December 23 if a mutually agreeable contract agreement is not reached before then," said Stephanie Bloomingdale, President of the Wisconsin AFL-CIO. "Wisconsin workers who work at the Red Cross staffing blood drives provide an essential service that enhances the health, safety, and well-being of countless communities across our state. Quality wages and a fair union contract help ensure workers are effectively trained and remain in their position to improve over years of service. The men and women of the labor movement stand shoulder to shoulder with Red Cross workers in the fight for a fair contract."

The members of AFSCME Locals 1205 and 1558 have been trying to negotiate a collective bargaining agreement with the American Red Cross since August of 2021. After several months, management had canceled or rescheduled 21 meetings and had attended only one.

"For sixteen months, management at Red Cross in Wisconsin has refused to negotiate in good faith with their employees," said AFSCME Council 32 Executive

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

If an agreement is not reached, the strike will take place between 5:00 AM and 10:00 PM on Friday, December 23rd. Striking workers 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 supporters to join Wisconsin’s Red Cross workers in solidarity.