

Teachers union leaders backing mandatory anti-virus vaccinations



By Mark Gruenberg

With schools reopening starting in mid-August, the leaders of the nation's two big teachers' unions are shifting their positions on mandatory anti-coronavirus vaccinations for teachers and staff.

Of course, add both Teachers (AFT) President Randi Weingarten and National Education Association Executive Director Kim Anderson, that's not such a stretch for their members. Both estimate 90% of their unions' members are fully vaccinated.

The issue is important, as the nation's 50.2 million public school students and 3.8 million teachers and staff head back to classrooms, even in a time of rising concern over the spread of the coronavirus's delta variant.

That's because that variant strikes more youngsters, proportionately, than the original virus did—and children under 12 are ineligible for vaccination, while only one-third of teenagers are vaccinated.

Weingarten, a New York middle school civics teacher, was direct. She wants a mandate. This week, her 1.6-million-member union's board will discuss mandating vaccination.

"As a matter of personal conscience, I think we need to be working with our employers, not opposing them, on vaccine mandates," she said on Meet The Press. "I wanted to bring all my leadership together to reconsider our policy that the best way to

do this was to do it volitionally (voluntarily)."

"Speaking for myself, I've seen how dangerous the delta variant is. We need to continue to work with employers to keep workers and students safe and that includes working with, not opposing, vaccine policies."

Anderson, who reports to NEA President Becky Pringle, a Philadelphia science teacher and vaccination proponent, said much the same thing, but more low-key. Her union too has urged its three

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million members to get fully vaccinated and she reports almost 90% have.

As far as mandating vaccination goes, Anderson told National Public Radio's Morning Edition "We're looking at that right now and talking with our leaders and members. But the most important thing

AFT and NEA leaders say that 90 percent of their members are already vaccinated.

is every school district should be collaborating with educators and community members to discuss their safety plans about how to keep everyone safe.”

Weingarten took weekend trips, part of her union’s \$5 million Back To School listening tour, to two states now among the nation’s hottest coronavirus spots, Florida and Missouri, thanks to political obstruction by their ruling Republican governors and legislatures.

“This is a public health crisis, and the politics are infecting this,” Weingarten declared.

The NEA’s convention, in early July, passed a resolution urging all members to get vaccinated, and endorsing vaccines for the kids, too. But the NEA also has to walk a finer line, as it has huge numbers of members in “red” states and rural areas where adults are refusing to be vaccinated.

“NEA encourages widespread use of safe and effective Covid-19 vaccines,” Pringle said even before its convention. “Vaccines are essential medical tools in preventing infectious diseases. We

believe parents/guardians should follow vaccination guidelines from the American Academy of Pediatrics and Centers for Disease Control.

“NEA has joined with numerous education, public and child health, labor, and children’s advocacy groups to support development and distribution of safe and effective Covid-19 vaccines for children under age 16. As rates of infection in children rise, vaccinating children is increasingly urgent both to facilitate safe in-person education and to curb mutations of the virus that causes the disease.”

“We’re running an informational campaign not only to our educators, but to their families as well so they can go out and buy their school supplies, and get their school clothes and get their shot—because it’s part of a really successful back-to-school plan.”

The Florida Education Association, the joint AFT-NEA affiliate in the Sunshine State, asserts DeSantis is sitting on \$11 billion in federal pandemic aid targeted to help schools safely reopen for in-person learning.

China joins global fight against ‘vaccine apartheid’

By Morning Star

Chinese President Xi Jinping reiterated calls for greater global cooperation in the fight against coronavirus and the equal distribution of vaccines. He said that collaboration was crucial to the fight against the pandemic as new strains emerge worldwide.

Xi recently committed to the donation of two billion vaccines to be made available to the world by the end of the year and a \$125 million donation to the World Health Organization’s Covax program, which distributes doses to low and middle-income countries.

In May, WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus warned against “vaccine apartheid,” calling on manufacturers to make shots available to the Covax vaccine-sharing facility.

Efforts have been undermined by both the United States and European Union, however, which have been slow to agree to forego patents while insisting that their populations be completely vaccinated before sharing doses internationally.

It is estimated that 11 billion doses are needed to fully vaccinate 70% of the world’s population against COVID-19. But just 3.2 billion doses had been administered by last month, with the Inter-

national Monetary Fund predicting the number would reach 6 billion by the end of 2021.

More than 80% of the doses administered around the world so far have gone to people in high-income and upper-middle-income countries. Only 1% of people in low-income countries have been given at least one dose. The African Union has said that the international Covax system is failing to deliver enough vaccines for its populations and is appealing for further help.

Xi said China would continue its efforts to fight the pandemic, with vaccines donated to more than 100 countries. The total amount of doses donated by China to date exceeds 770 million, putting the country first in the world among donor nations.

Despite the fact that China has largely defeated COVID-19 at home, earlier this month Wuhan and some other areas were again locked down after the outbreak of a new variant was detected, with three people testing positive for the disease.

Swift action and sharing of technology, vaccines, and medical supplies including protective equipment, masks, and ventilators have seen China lead the global fight against coronavirus, with Beijing’s efforts praised as a model of internationalism.

Country pledges to donate two billion doses by the end of 2021.

Rural towns deserve more than just prison jobs



By Robert P. Alvarez

The California Correctional Center, a prison in the small Northern California town of Susanville, is closing. I was pleased when I heard that the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation would be shutting down one of its 35 state prisons, and rushed to tell my wife the news. We both believe prisons do more harm than good and are a waste of taxpayer money.

She cheered, but then reminded me of something important. As in many small towns across the country, the prison industry is the bedrock of the local economy, currently home to both California Correctional Center and High Desert State Prison.

I paused because I know her father used to work at a prison in the town right next to where we grew up. When that prison closed and he lost his job, it sent him into a tailspin.

He worked at a private prison run by CoreCivic, one of the biggest private prison companies in the country. They are often located in small towns like Susanville where they are major employers.

But not all jobs are created equal. We must move away from exploitative and extractive industries. That means pulling money out of the bloated prison-industrial complex and putting it into better jobs and programs for America's small towns.

Right now, the prison industry feasts on Black and Latino people. Communities of color are criminalized at higher rates than white people for the same behaviors. Then they're transported from the urban

areas where most of them live to rural prisons. Their incarceration subsidizes majority-white towns with correctional jobs. That's wrong.

I get why towns like Susanville cry foul when prisons close and take livelihoods with them. It's scary. Schools lose funding. The local government loses tax revenue. Prisons are hazardous for both correctional officers and the incarcerated population, they don't deter future crime, and they come with an absurd price tag—especially considering that they are terribly ineffective.

According to the Prison Policy Initiative, our federal, state, and local governments spend about \$81 billion per year on prisons, jails, probation, and parole. That's money that could be used for jobs that actually benefit communities.

I'm from a small Northern California town. I know how badly we need jobs. It doesn't take a scientist to figure out what those jobs should be.

It feels like every year states out West suffer a new "worst fire on record" and battle another drought. We need more firefighters and forest service jobs. We need land and water management jobs. We also need to develop more clean energy sources, from wind to solar to hydro. And, if you're from a rural area like me, you know how badly we need public transportation and broadband infrastructure.

Towns like Susanville are hurt when prisons shutter. But it isn't because they're clamoring to guard people in cages. It's because they want jobs. Let's give them ones that make the world a better place.

Rural prison towns need jobs. There are better ones than guarding people in cages.

LOCAL NEWS

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Democratic Party staff goes union

By Mark Gruenberg

Following in the path blazed by Democratic presidential campaign staffers—including those for Bernie Sanders and Joe Biden—the Democratic National Committee’s permanent staff unionized on August 3 with Service Employees Local 500. Recognition came via card-check. DNC leaders welcomed it.

The unit will have approximately 150 people. Determining exactly who, and which positions, are covered and which aren’t will be the first task the two sides undertake.

“DNC staff see unionizing as not just an act of principle, but a reaffirmation of solidarity among workers and the key role of unions in building the middle class. While unionization efforts often stem from workplace disputes, that is not the case at the DNC. Staff and management in fact agree that unionizing the workplace is a real-life adoption of Democrats’ shared values,” their joint announcement said.

The DNC “has the ability to be a powerful agent of positive change for working Americans,” Sustaining Donor Manager Cristen Sparago, a lead organizer, said in the statement. “We organized because we believe when workers are strong, America is strong.” Unionizing will be valuable for workers of color, LGBTQ workers, and differently abled workers, Sparago added.

“My grandmother came to this country 50 years ago as an immigrant and for 30 years was a teacher’s aide and a proud union member,” said Thaha Sherwani, a video researcher. “I’ve seen firsthand how valuable unions are and I know my colleagues share the conviction that unions are a positive force for our country and our workforce.”

¿Por qué votar NO a la destitución del gobernador de California, Gavin Newsom?

By J. Lopez and M. Bechtel

Gracias a un esfuerzo lanzado a principios del año pasado por republicanos anti-impuestos y anti-inmigrantes ansiosos por reconstruir su partido fallido en el estado más poblado del país, los votantes de California enfrentan una dura elección el 14 de septiembre: si mantener al gobernador demócrata Newsom en el cargo o para reemplazarlo de un campo de candidatos dominado por clones de Trump.

Algunos candidatos republicanos en la carrera de destitución pueden emplear tácticas y cuestiones de distracción o moderar sus posiciones para engañar a los votantes de California que tienden a ser más liberales. Pero abierta o encubiertamente, los candidatos republicanos se adscriben a prácticas antidemocráticas, tácticas de miedo a los inmigrantes, estereotipos racistas, comportamiento sexista, odio homofóbico, apoyo a la pena de muerte, debilitamiento de las leyes sobre armas y negación del cambio climático.

En esencia, todo lo que Trump favorece y el gobernador Newsom se opone.

Según una nueva encuesta del Instituto de Estudios Gubernamentales de UC Berkeley / Los Angeles Times, mientras que solo el 36% de todos los votantes registrados dicen que destituirían al gobernador y el 50% se opone, alrededor del 47% de los votantes que tienen más probabilidades de acudir a las urnas votarían para llamarlo, una diferencia apenas por debajo del margen de error de la encuesta.

La extrema derecha republicana cuenta con la sustancial mayoría de votantes demócratas de California y los votantes independientes de tendencia progresista para quedarse en casa, arrullada por una falsa sensación de que no hay forma de que una pequeña minoría republicana derroque a Newsom.

En la línea está la protección de las ganancias ganadas con esfuerzo que el gobernador Newsom expandió, como aumento de salario, licencia por enfermedad pagada y licencia familiar pagada, duplicando el crédito tributario por ingreso del trabajo para familias de bajos ingresos y expandiendo el derecho a formar sindicatos, incluida la firma de leyes para otorgar a los trabajadores del cuidado de niños el derecho a organizarse.

Y según Bloomberg News, el estado “no tiene pares entre las economías desarrolladas para la creación de empleos, el aumento de los ingresos familiares, el crecimiento de la fabricación, la inversión en innovación, la producción de energía limpia y el respaldo de las leyes de seguridad de armas de sentido común”.

Claramente, elegir a un republicano de extrema derecha a favor de Trump para gobernar el estado más poblado de la nación, y un faro de la política progresista, está fuera de discusión. Es urgente que los californianos voten en las elecciones revocatorias del 14 de septiembre y que se aseguren de que los familiares y amigos también voten.

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