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Labor's next big fight:

Largest single-employer union negotiation in the U.S. inches closer to strike

On Saturday 85,000 Kaiser Permanente healthcare workers will kick-off a strike authorization vote over unfair labor practices

Healthcare workers say chronic under-staffing is driving a growing patient care crisis

LOS ANGELES, CA – A strike may be looming at one of the nation's largest employers.

Healthcare workers at Kaiser Permanente announced on Thursday that they'll hold a strike authorization vote over the corporation's unfair labor practices if a settlement isn't reached by Saturday, August 26. Following the UPS labor settlement with the Teamsters, the labor negotiations covering 85,000 Kaiser healthcare workers – represented by the Coalition of Kaiser Permanente Unions – have now become the largest single-employer labor negotiations occurring in the United States.

At issue, healthcare workers say, are a series of unfair labor practices related to bargaining in bad faith, along with simmering staff concerns related to unsafe staffing levels that can lead to dangerously long wait times, mistaken diagnosis, and neglect. After years of the COVID pandemic and chronic understaffing, Kaiser healthcare workers are calling on management to provide safe staffing levels.

“We want Kaiser to stop committing unfair labor practices, and bargain in good faith. It’s heartbreaking to see our patients suffer from long wait times for the care they need, all because Kaiser won’t put patient and worker safety first,” said **Paula Coleman, a clinical laboratory assistant at Kaiser Permanente in Englewood, Colorado**. “We will have no choice but to vote to strike if Kaiser won’t bargain in good faith and let us give patients the quality care they deserve.”

If Kaiser executives don’t take swift action to rectify the unfair labor practices, workers say they’ll have no choice but to strike. Workers also say the company needs to immediately and substantively address the growing care crisis at its hospitals and clinics.

“We are so disheartened coming out of these latest negotiations with Kaiser. Their executives are not bargaining in good faith. They are refusing to listen to caregivers and provide the safe staffing we need to protect our patients,” said **Gabe Montoya, emergency room technician at Kaiser Downey**. “Standing up for patients is our priority, so we’re prepared to vote yes for an unfair labor practice strike if that’s what it takes.”

The Kaiser healthcare workers are members of the Coalition of Kaiser Permanente Unions, which represents more than 85,000 healthcare workers in seven states and the District of Columbia. In April, the Coalition began its national bargaining process. The Coalition and Kaiser Permanente last negotiated a contract in 2019, before healthcare workers found themselves on the frontlines of the COVID pandemic that has worsened working conditions and exacerbated a healthcare staffing crisis.

Tensions have been rising as the workers’ contract expiration looms. In July, [tens of thousands of healthcare workers picketed Kaiser hospitals across the U.S.](#) to protest the company’s growing care crisis.

Workers say that Kaiser is committing unfair labor practices and also that under-staffing is boosting Kaiser’s profits but hurting patients. In a [recent survey of 33,000 employees](#), 2/3 of workers said they’d seen care delayed or denied due to short staffing.

“Our patients expect more from a healthcare system that reported \$3 billion in profits in the first half of this year alone, and so do we,” said **Nahid Bokae, a Pharmacist in Sterling, Virginia**. “Kaiser can afford to end this dangerous understaffing, but they choose not to. For the sake of our patients and our colleagues, we’re prepared to authorize a strike because Kaiser cannot keep bargaining in bad faith and committing unfair labor practices.”

Even as some frontline healthcare heroes live in their cars and patients wait longer for care, Kaiser released new financials this month indicating they made [\\$3 billion in profit in just the first six months of this year](#). Despite being a non-profit organization – which means it pays no income taxes on its earnings and extremely limited property taxes – Kaiser has reported more than \$24 billion in profit over the last five years. Kaiser’s CEO was compensated more than \$16 million in 2021, and forty-nine executives at Kaiser are compensated more than \$1 million annually. Kaiser

Permanente has investments of \$113 billion in the US and abroad, including in fossil fuels, casinos, for-profit prisons, alcohol companies, military weapons and more.

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[The Coalition of Kaiser Permanente Unions](#) unites more than 85,000 healthcare workers at Kaiser Permanente facilities in California, Colorado, Oregon, the District of Columbia, Hawaii, Maryland, Virginia, and Washington.