

Strike Mandate Vote Explained

Strike Mandate Vote Made Simple: Understand What Your "YES" Vote Means

A strike mandate vote is NOT a vote to strike. Rather, it IS a vote to show the employer that you support your bargaining team and the proposals we've developed together over the past year, by giving your bargaining team a mandate to call for a strike, at some point in the future, if necessary to secure a fair contract for all of us. Again, a strike mandate vote is NOT a vote to go on strike. In fact, history shows that a high "YES" vote in strike mandate vote tends to reduce the likelihood that a strike will be necessary, as the employer will become more willing to work with our bargaining team to make the improvements to the contract members have asked for. History also shows (as does the recent example of the CAW, which gave a 58% mandate and is now facing massive concessions) that a weak strike mandate vote results in prolonged negotiations and concessions to current contract provisions.

Why do we need to hold a strike mandate?

A clear "YES" vote is our ONLY source of bargaining power. But until we have a strong "YES" result in the strike mandate vote, very little progress is likely to be made at the table. This helps the bargaining committee speed up the bargaining process, as it will convince the employer to continue to bargaining toward a new contract that addresses the membership's priority concerns. It tells the decision-makers on the employer's bargaining team (and the people they must report to) they must bargain with us fairly, as equals in the negotiations process. It makes certain that both parties come to the table with a mandate to bargain a contract, and as such it speeds up the process.

How is a strike mandate vote distinct from a "strike vote"?

There is an important distinction between a "strike mandate vote" and a "strike vote" that is often not fully understood by union members and the university community. Indeed, they are often used somewhat interchangeably by union members, sometime erroneously, which adds to the confusion.

whether it is called a strike vote or a strike mandate vote by union members and officers generally depends on the context. Often, when two parties (the union and the employer) have a very established relationship, having a strike mandate is somewhat less necessary in terms of moving the talks forward at the table. In these cases, often the parties bargain for months, and then at some point there is a distinct breakdown in talks, and the union begins to feel it may be necessary to strike in order to meet the

needs of their membership. In this case, union members are informed about what is being offered by the employer, and they vote whether to give the union's bargaining team the mandate to call a strike, with the knowledge and expectation that a strike is likely and would occur quickly. Generally, if this mandate is given, the employer either returns to the table or a strike begins. This is what should be accurately referred to as a strike vote. But, again, it is the same legal process required by the Act as what should be accurately called strike mandate vote.

A strike mandate vote, is (again) the same legal vote as the strike vote, but it has a very different meaning and purpose in our context. Through our strike mandate vote, the purpose is to give the union's bargaining team the support they need in order actually have the employer BEGIN serious bargaining on the priority issues identify, but there has been very little monetary movement by the employer. The strike mandate vote does give the union's bargaining team the power to call a strike is necessary at some point well into the future, but the mandate is given in the absence of a strike deadline or any crisis in negotiations. In this case, as time goes on, the union will continue to negotiate for many weeks and even months prior to even considering calling a strike, and will have ongoing consultations with the members, through formal meetings and also informal discussions every day, to determine whether we are making enough progress at the table or whether a strike might need to be considered. But, in all likelihood, if members vote "YES" in the strike mandate vote, we should be able to negotiate a fair contract at the bargaining table, which is our common goal.

Will there automatically be a strike if I vote "YES" in the strike mandate vote?

We have heard that some members worry that a strike mandate vote means that a strike will occur. This is NOT the case. While a "YES" vote does give the bargaining team to use their judgment and consider calling for a strike if necessary, at some point in the future and ONLY in the event that talks break down and we are otherwise unable to negotiate a fair contract that addresses the needs identified by our members, a strike will NOT necessary occur. Indeed, we are NOT at present in a legal strike position, as talks have not broken down to the point that either side has determined a strike deadline is necessary. As such, while a strike is not an impossibility at some point in the future, there WILL NOT be a strike immediately following a strong "YES" in the mandate vote.

We are always trying to ensure that members understand both of these points. Our strike mandate vote is NOT a vote to go on strike — indeed, there is not a strike deadline, there is not a crisis in bargaining, and there has not been a final offer made by the employer. But it does give the union the mandate, at some point in the future if all of the above were to occur, to call a strike if necessary to meet the demands that our members have set us to the table to negotiate into our new contract.

What will happen if I vote YES? What will happen if I vote NO?

The good news is that, assuming members vote YES in the strike mandate vote, it is very likely that a fair contract can be reached at the bargaining table. Indeed, through dozens of successful strike mandate votes throughout our history, if the membership does not vote YES in the mandate vote, will continue to bargain, because we will have no power at the table, there will be no gains made in the contract, but rather there will be losses to take home pay and benefits.

We trust that members will make the choice that benefits all of us.