



For Immediate Release

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One-Year Anniversary of Historic Cook County Strike

CHICAGO, IL – Today marks the one-year anniversary of the historic Cook County strike. More than 2,500 essential workers, represented by SEIU Local 73, took part in an 18-day strike to fight for a fair contract.

"Workers demanded that Cook County President Toni Preckwinkle respect, protect and pay them. And our fight is not over," said SEIU Local 73 President Dian Palmer.

At the end of the strike in 2021, SEIU Local 73 and Cook County came to an agreement on across-the-board raises, pay equity, and hazard pay for work during the pandemic. However, the contract has not yet been finalized. Workers have been waiting for more than six months for an arbitrator to rule on whether facilities management and CCH maintenance workers should receive a wage increase, and whether workers with 10 or more years of service should be rewarded for their longevity in serving Cook County.

"President Preckwinkle is getting a \$17,000 raise, while she continues to refuse to give these essential workers their agreed-upon pandemic pay," said Palmer. "These workers have shown up continuously throughout the ongoing pandemic to keep Cook County running. Many have lost their lives to COVID. And still, Preckwinkle refuses to honor that sacrifice. That's not right!"

"Toni Preckwinkle has turned her back on us and continues to make us feel undervalued," said Ward Clerk Eugenia Harris. "She makes 3-4 times what we make. While we are struggling to make ends meet. She gets a 10% raise while workers wait for more than a year for their raise. It's not that she can't release our pandemic pay, it's that she won't do it. We come to work every day and continue to do our jobs and yet she still won't give us our money."

Cook County workers have seen the betrayal by Preckwinkle. After working for nearly two years without a contract, workers are prepared to fight when negotiations begin in 2024.

"Our union has never backed down in the fight for what is right," said Palmer. "And we never will."

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SEIU Local 73 represents more than 31,000 workers, primarily in public service and publicly funded positions in school districts, municipalities, social service agencies, and many other job classifications in Illinois and Indiana. We are dedicated to improving the lives of workers and their families.