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AFT Leaders on Proposed Deal to End West Virginia Teacher Strike

WASHINGTON—AFT President Randi Weingarten and AFT-West Virginia President Christine Campbell issued a statement on the proposed deal to end the West Virginia teachers strike. While it's not over we expect the deal to pass.

Weingarten said:

“I’m proud to be in West Virginia today to stand with the educators and school personnel who stood strong and stood together to fight for what they need to do their jobs and stay in the profession, and for what their kids need to thrive.

“West Virginia has a long history of labor activism—where right often met might. Today, right beat might in the truest tradition of Mother Jones. That victory is a testament to the voice and determination, the resilience and compassion, and the collective power and organizing of the educators of this state. The governor and the Legislature heard, finally, and acted, we are grateful for that.

“While the strike has been front-page news for days, what was missed was that, for months, educators and school personnel were having conversations with on another—on Facebook, in-person—about the issues they were facing and what to do about them. By the time the decision to strike was made, workers were united in their demand for action, the unions were together in solidarity, and parents and community members were there to support them. Teachers and their unions even ensured that our strike and disaster relief funds could be used to feed the students in the state who get breakfast and lunch at school.

“Make no mistake, the attacks on working people aren’t just happening in the classroom or on the job, they’re happening in the Supreme Court and in the state legislatures around the country. But teachers and support personnel in West Virginia showed that, as corporate and right-wing interests try to thwart our voice even more, we will rise up. If you push us to the brink, we will fight for ourselves, our families and our students. We want to teach. We want to do this job, and we proved it during this strike. This isn’t the end of the battle; teachers are still not paid well enough, and they still don’t have enough resources. But in West Virginia, lawmakers were put on notice that they needed to act in the best interests of kids and workers, not for special interests. And if they didn’t learn that lesson through this strike, workers will make sure they do in November.”

Campbell said:

“This is a huge victory and symbol of respect for every teacher and school support staff member in the state of West Virginia. Thousands of educators and their supporters came to the state Capitol for the last week to ensure the public and the Legislature understand how important their jobs are and that they have been underpaid and undervalued. The strike and its strong outcome should be seen as a shot across the bow to every lawmaker who may underestimate the support teachers have, the hard job they do and their willingness to stand up for what they deserve as they educate the next generation.”

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