



Press Release
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State Board Agrees with State Scientists: Bargaining with Newsom at Impasse

Despite nearly 1,300 days in talks, the Governor hasn't offered salaries that appropriately value state scientists

SACRAMENTO – A state labor authority has agreed with the California Association of Professional Scientists (CAPS) that, after nearly 1,300 days in talks, further negotiations between the union and Gov. Gavin Newsom have become so unproductive that talking further makes no sense without a mediator.

The Public Employee Relations Board (PERB), which administers the laws governing California state-employee unions and management, issued its finding in response to CAPS' Sept. 12 request for an impasse determination to move the talks into mediation. In response, the Department of Human Resources (CalHR, the Newsom Administration's bargaining arm) said it "does not believe the parties are at an impasse" and accused CAPS of bargaining in bad faith. However, CalHR said it "does see merit in mediation to assist the parties in reaching an agreement."

CAPS Bargaining Chair Jacqueline Tkac said, "It's disappointing to see CalHR say we're acting in bad faith when all we have ever wanted is to reach a deal that appropriately values our state scientists and ensure the Governor's important climate-change, consumer protection, and public health initiatives keep moving forward. We've been patient. We've worked hard. Now it's time to take advantage of this additional, legal, commonly used tool to break the logjam. If there's ever been a better example of impasse than talking 1,288 days without reaching an agreement, I don't know what it could be."

CAPS started bargaining four months before its last contract expired in July 2020, urging the administration to negotiate an agreement that would provide pay equity for state scientists whose salaries have lagged those of their managers and supervisors by 30% or more for a decade. A similar salary gap has existed for nearly 20 years between state scientists and state engineers and with comparable federal and academic scientists.

A recent *Politico* report noted the Governor's "offers have been far short of the union's demands, coming in at around 2 percent per year plus some special pay bumps of 2 percent to 5 percent per year for certain classifications." In August, CAPS members voted for the first time in CAPS' 39-year history to give its leaders the authority to call a strike. The union's move last week to seek an impasse declaration was also a first.

The PERB determination requires CAPS and the state Department of Human Resources (CalHR), which bargains on behalf of the Governor, to enter mediation. There is no time limit for those discussions.

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ABOUT CAPS

CAPS represents roughly 5,600 state-employed scientists (including 4,300 rank and file and 1,300 supervisors and managers) working in over 30 state departments in 81 scientific classifications. CAPS members protect Californians from life-threatening diseases; safeguard our wildlife and abundant natural resources; and protect our food supply, air and water from toxic waste and pollution. Follow on X.com and Instagram: @capsscientists.