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California Federation of Teachers Votes to Boycott Staples over “Dirty Deal” with U.S. Post Office that Privatizes Work of Local Post Offices

***Teachers union encourages educators to purchase school
supplies from stores other than Staples***

Sacramento, CA – The Executive Council of the California Federation of Teachers (CFT), representing 120,000 educational employees from Head Start through university, voted unanimously last evening to boycott office supply and bulk goods retailer Staples. The CFT took this action at the request of the American Postal Workers Union, which has been opposing a no-bid sweetheart deal between the United States Postal Service and the giant office supply chain to operate postal counters in Staples stores. Staples workers earning minimum wages and meager benefits staff the Staples postal counters, rather than uniformed postal employees paid a living wage. Staples sales clerks have a high turnover rate, receive little training and are not required to have a background check or take an oath before handling U.S. mail. The APWU sees this Staples “pilot” as the first step in privatizing the USPS’ retail operations and eliminating local public post offices.

Last fall, USPS announced that postal counters would open in 82 Staples stores in four states; 29 are located in California. The Postmaster General has announced his intention of expanding the Staples partnership to 1,500 Staples locations nationwide following the trial period.

CFT has long been opposed to the privatization of public services in schools, colleges and other public institutions, especially when the contractual terms between the government agency and the private contractor are cloaked behind a veil of secrecy.

“These no-bid contracts point to a dirty deal. The consumer will suffer—a lack of postal training means less mail security and worse service, without any cost savings for the consumer,” said CFT President Joshua Pechthalt. “By this simple act—asking our members and educators across the country to buy their school supplies elsewhere—we put USPS management and a profit seeking corporation on notice that the quality of mail delivery is not for sale.” It’s estimated that roughly a third of Staples’ revenues comes from the sale of school supplies.

The resolution passed by the CFT on April 28th may extend beyond California. The California teachers union will be hosting the biennial national convention of the American Federation of Teachers in Los Angeles in mid-July. CFT’s resolution calls on the state union to introduce a similar resolution at the national convention.

“This is the people’s post office, and the people have choices,” said Pechthalt. “We want to send a clear message to USPS and Staples that we value public service. When it comes to privatizing the U.S. mail, we say ‘no sale.’ Our members have choices where to buy school supplies, and we won’t shop at Staples as long as they operate postal counters without uniformed postal workers.”

CFT’s resolution on Staples can be found at: www.cft.org

Information on APWU’s Stop Staples Campaign can be found at: www.stopstaples.org and at www.apwu.org

Recent news stories about Staples postal counters by The *Huffington Post*, The *New Republic*, the Associated Press, NPR and CNN can be found at:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/04/15/postal-service-staples_n_5155270.html?1397597725

<http://www.newrepublic.com/article/116968/usps-outsourcing-itself-staples>

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/postal-workers-union-protest-staples-program>

<http://www.npr.org/2014/04/24/306532699/postal-workers-protest-at-staples-over-shift-in-jobs>

<http://money.cnn.com/2014/04/24/news/economy/usps-staples-protest/>

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The California Federation of Teachers is a union of professionals affiliated with the more than 1.6 million member American Federation of Teachers. The CFT represents over 120,000 educational employees working at every level of the education system in California, from Head Start to the University of California.