

Resolution in Support of the Boston School Bus Drivers

Whereas the Boston School Bus Drivers Union—United Steelworkers Local 8751 has lived the slogan *An Injury to One Is an Injury to All* whenever a sister union has a tough fight foisted on it by union-hating bosses. Over the years, they have lent moral and material resources to the United Farm Workers; adopted families during the long strikes at Phelps-Dodge, Hormel, Caterpillar, the Detroit newspapers and others; and given solidarity to workers around the world, from South Africa to Haiti to Colombia to Palestine.

Whereas in that spirit they are asking for our help. This is as militant, as class conscious and as anti-racist a union that you will find anywhere. These drivers organized their union forty years ago in the heat of battle, while they were having to drive through a hail of rocks and bricks hurled by hard core racists determined to stop school desegregation. Not an easy task, to fight the racists and at the same time fight the school board for union recognition and a first contract. But they did it and they have survived numerous attacks during the past three decades, waged by a series of anti-labor companies hired after school transportation was privatized.

Whereas almost all of these drivers are Haitian, Cape Verdean, Latino/a, or African-American. They have battled racism on and off the job for four decades.

Whereas now they are in the fight of their lives. The notorious France-based Veolia corporation took over school transportation in Boston in 2013. They make the former school transit operators Laidlaw and First Student look tame in comparison. Veolia is hell-bent on breaking this union and they are not without allies. Powerful forces in the political establishment, media and courts are arrayed against the local and are backing this transnational monster unconditionally.

Whereas as it has done with every union contract from Arizona to Sweden, from day one Veolia has violated almost every provision of Local 8751's collective bargaining agreement. In October 2013, Veolia responded to a request by union workers to meet by locking them out, falsely accusing the union of leading a wildcat strike and using that as an excuse to fire four of the union's leaders.

Whereas, at the heart of this struggle is the war Veolia is waging on the hard-won wages, rights and benefits the union has won over 40 years. The contract is the envy of transportation unions across the country, and the company has declared war on every provision, including how payment is decided, seniority rights, sick leave, disability, health insurance, grievance procedures -- even the all past rights and practices section of the contract.

Whereas, the union is fighting back. On June 30, last day of the current collective bargaining agreement, hundreds of union members and supporters participated in a Solidarity Day march, ending with a members' contract briefing in the Drivers' Room at the Veolia Freeport bus yard. The contract specifically states all union officials have

unlimited access to the property for conducting union business. But Veolia cooked up a series of trumped-up felony charges against grievance chair Steve Kirschbaum, effectively seeking to criminalize union activity. Fortunately there were dozens of witnesses, who have given sworn statements that the bogus charges against him never happened.

Whereas, along with the attempt to bust the union, Veolia is complicit in the re-segregation of Boston's public schools, seeking to dismantle African-American and Latino students' access to equal quality education via busing, initially mandated by federal court order. Court-mandated busing is just one aspect of the \$100 million in austerity cuts students are facing.

Whereas four union leaders—Andre Francois, Gary Murchison, Steve Gillis and Steve Kirschbaum—have been fired. They haven't worked since October 9, 2013. Their unemployment benefits have long since run out. And if that was not bad enough, one of the four, Brother Kirschbaum, is facing years in jail under trumped-up felony charges with the trial beginning February 2.

Whereas in the midst of all this, the concessionary contract demands of Veolia are so egregious that strike preparations have begun.

Therefore be it resolved that the United Auto Workers Local 2865 signifies support for the Boston School Bus Drivers, USW Local 8751 struggle for a fair contract by asking our member unions to call, and have their members call the following individuals to demand that the four be rehired immediately:

Mayor Martin J. Walsh [617-635-4500](tel:617-635-4500) fax: [617-635-2851](tel:617-635-2851) mayor@boston.gov

School Superintendent John McDonough [\(617\) 635-9050](tel:617-635-9050) fax: [\(617\) 635-9059](tel:617-635-9059)
superintendent@bostonpublicschools.org

General Manager Alex Roman III [617-603-7800](tel:617-603-7800)
alexander.roman@veoliatransdev.com

Also be it resolved that we will ask our member unions to call, and have their members call the Suffolk County DA, Daniel Conley, to demand the charges against Stevan Kirschbaum be dropped at 617-619-4000 fax 617-619-4210.

Further be it resolved that we will ask our member unions to donate. The fired workers and their families are struggling now and more funds will be needed in the event of a strike. Ask the member unions to send a check to Friends of the School Bus 5, P.O. Box 141, Stoughton, MA 02072.