



MINNESOTA TEAMSTERS LOCAL 320 PUBLIC AND LAW ENFORCEMENT EMPLOYEES



ST. LOUIS COUNTY TEAMSTERS VOTE OVERWHELMINGLY TO AUTHORIZE COUNTY-WIDE STRIKE

The Unionized Members of the St. Louis County Public Works Department have Voted to Authorize a Strike Against the County

(For Immediate Release 12.16.2019)

Duluth, Minn.-

On Sunday, December 15, 2019, St. Louis County Teamsters employed in the Public Works Department authorized a strike to follow the current labor contract's expiration on December 31, 2019. Of those Teamsters who voted, 99.1 percent (112-1) authorized a work stoppage against the County. A strike will encompass approximately 180 county employees mostly comprised of snow plow operators and mechanics in addition to bridge workers, building maintenance, parts specialists, and sign technicians.

Teamsters Local 320 will file its intent to strike with the Minnesota Bureau of Mediation Services (BMS) after January 1, 2020. A date and time for the work stoppage has not yet been determined and will be subject to BMS mediation and an internal process set by Teamsters Local 320.

The strike vote is the result of St. Louis County's healthcare inequality for employees of the Public Works Department who are provided less coverage and forced to pay 31 percent more than management and non-union employees. Furthermore, Teamsters are demanding a restoration of their seniority rights formerly rescinded through arbitration. An increase in the cost of living is also a major concern for Teamsters.

"We have offered many solutions to help St. Louis County retain and recruit top talent," says Teamsters Local 320 Business Agent and lead negotiator Erik Skoog. "Instead, the County has been combative and chose to ignore our requests."

Heavy Equipment Operator Connie Westlund of Duluth voted to authorize the strike and will participate in a work stoppage should one be called by Teamsters Local 320.

"Every single day we are committed to maintaining and clearing roads, especially during inclement weather," says Westlund. "Yet, we feel unappreciated by an employer who fails to address our concerns in a comprehensive and respectful manner."

"If a work stoppage is called, St. Louis County Teamsters will be supported by multimillion dollar Teamsters Strike and Defense Fund," says Local 320 Secretary Treasurer and principal officer Brian Aldes. "Our members will have the full support of the Teamsters including strike sanctions against the County should a work stoppage occur."

The St. Louis County Public Works Department is vital for inter-county travel and commerce within Minnesota's largest county spanning from Duluth to the Canadian Border.

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