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AFT Massachusetts Votes to Boycott Framingham-Based Staples Over Deal Between Retailer and USPS That Privatizes Work of Local Post Offices

Teachers Union in Support of Postal Workers Urges Educators and School Staff Not to Purchase School Supplies From Staples – Massachusetts Will Join State Teachers Unions From California, Michigan, New Hampshire and Elsewhere in Urging a National Boycott Vote at the Biennial AFT Convention in Los Angeles This Week

BOSTON – AFT Massachusetts, which represents teachers, school workers, public librarians and college faculty across Massachusetts, announced today that it was joining a growing boycott of the office supply and bulk goods retailer Staples. The announcement by Massachusetts teachers and school workers is significant because the Bay State is one of four test markets for a pilot program that moves postal services from local Post Offices to Staples stores. Additionally, Staples corporate headquarters is located in Framingham, Massachusetts.

AFT Massachusetts leaders said the union has taken this action to support the American Postal Workers Union's battle against a no-bid sweetheart deal struck between the United States Postal Service and the giant office supply chain for an 82-store pilot program in which postal counters providing most of the same services as local post offices would operate in Staples stores staffed by low-wage Staples employees rather than uniformed postal workers. USPS managers have stated that they would like to expand the program to 1,500 Staples locations. In recent weeks, the USPS/Staples partnership has drawn outrage across the country, and a May 21 *Boston Globe* story indicated that Staples may want to consider backing out of the arrangement if public and labor opposition persist.¹

This week, the 1.5 million-member American Federation of Teachers is expected to pass a national boycott resolution at the union's biennial convention in Los Angeles that begins on July 10. A large protest of AFT members and postal workers has been scheduled for July 12, in front of the Staples Center, which is adjacent to the Los Angeles Convention Center, where thousands of AFT delegates are convening.

¹ <http://www.bostonglobe.com/business/2014/05/20/postal-service-union-confrontation-over-mail-service-staples-stores/soV6Agpidfr9uX7n50CnWI/story.html>

“Public school teachers and our other members value public service,” said AFT Massachusetts President Tom Gosnell. “We know that postal workers are highly trained and care deeply about the security and sanctity of the mail. The decision to outsource neighborhood post offices across the country to a big-box retailer means potentially fewer good jobs and poorer service for our communities.” Gosnell added, “Our members have choices on where to buy school supplies. As long as Staples continues with this USPS program we will encourage our members to shop elsewhere.”

AFT Massachusetts, a strong voice for collaborative education reform that is good for students and fair to educators, represents over 25,000 public school employees and higher education faculty and staff. The union is an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers and the AFL-CIO.

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