

MEDIA ADVISORY FOR: Thursday, September 7, 2017

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Riverside County Workers On Day Two of Strike Joined by California State Treasurer John Chiang and NextGen American Founder Tom Steyer; Workers Take Demands to End Labor Law Violations Directly to Riverside County Board of Supervisors

Riverside County Charged with a Whopping 19 Labor Law Violations and Demands of Transparency Amidst the Use of Millions of Taxpayer Dollars for Sweetheart Consulting Contracts; Frontline Public Service Providers to Walk Off the Job for Second Day in a Row

Riverside, CA—Governatorial candidate John Chiang, NextGen American Founder Tom Steyer, community advocates, and Riverside residents confirmed to join day two of Unfair Labor Practice strike against Riverside County’s rampant labor law violations and the increasingly dangerous working conditions ignored by County officials. Workers and their supporters will descend on the Riverside County Administration Center, determined to take their demands directly to top county officials.

Their Unfair Labor Practice strike is a direct response to the County *being charged with an incredible 19 labor law violations* throughout the bargaining process, stemming from the surveillance and harassment of County employees and their refusal to be transparent about critical information regarding their use of millions in taxpayer dollars.

Who: State Treasurer John Chiang, NextGen American Founder Tom Steyer, Riverside County Employees, Community Advocates, and County Residents

What: Day Two Strike & Rally

**When: Thursday, September 7, 2017 at 10:30 a.m.
John Chiang Availability 11 a.m.**

**Where: Riverside County Administration Center
4080 Lemon St., Riverside CA 92501**

Visuals: Performers On Stilts Impersonating County Board of Supervisors, Workers with Picket Signs

John Chiang and NextGen American Founder Tom Steyer will join community leaders and fellow Riverside County residents in their demands for a fair and transparent bargaining process, so that both patient and employee safety and the strengthening of vital public services can be properly addressed. Riverside County officials have been heavily criticized for their reckless revenue waste, including *spending over \$140 million in taxpayer dollars on sweetheart consulting contracts and a toxic Wall Street swap deal*, while the demands of workers and residents for a reinvestment in vital public services continue to be ignored.

Among the long list of Unfair Labor Practice charges is the County's failure to provide critical information needed to properly assess the levels of staffing and services needed to meet public needs.

The County's lack of transparency was particularly criticized as County officials callously dismissed proposals to expand critical health and mental health care services, but then handed out millions in taxpayer dollars to foreign consulting giants, to essentially do the job that top county executives are *already* paid to do. Workers and residents point to excessively long wait times and insufficient level of services needed to meet the public need, while County officials continue to deny access to the critical data needed to assess how public services are being compromised. At Riverside University Health Services facilities, the average wait time for patient in the ER before being admitted is eleven hours and ten minutes, while the national average is only five hours and thirty-eight minutes.

Background:

Revenue Waste

Time and time again, Riverside county has chosen to sacrifice vital public services and its frontline civil servants to balance budgets, while continuing to squander millions of taxpayer dollars on sweetheart consulting contracts and millions more on a toxic swap deal they have yet to renegotiate.

The additional \$40 million recently given to KPMG consulting firm received criticism even from County Supervisor Kevin Jeffries who told the Press Enterprise:

"Seeking external evaluations can be a valuable tool to make the needed changes. But when the bill due for those external evaluators actually starts costing you the loss of services to the public, you have to question who's being served — the taxpayers or the consulting firm?"

"It is very clear to me," Jeffries added. "That the additional \$20 million we are going to pay KPMG is going to come from taxpayer funds that could otherwise be used to pay for essential public services. This is happening at a time when we need every dollar we can find."

At the end of the day, while lucrative consulting contracts are being expanded, vital public services are being shortchanged and public frontline workers are being asked to go without the additional resources needed to meet the public's needs and to retain and recruit skilled service providers. On the "swap deal," approved by a body of Board of Supervisors that included Supervisor John Tavaglione, the County was sold on the idea of an interest rate swap as a means of achieving a lower "synthetic" fixed rate than could be achieved by issuing plain vanilla fixed-rate bonds. Riverside County was not alone in being duped into these swap deals; other municipalities like the City of Richmond, the City of San Francisco, and Jefferson County in Alabama also made similar dealings.

As a result of entering into this bad deal, the County has already paid \$48.9 million in excessive fees and is on the hook for up to \$20.5 million more until the deal ends in 2032, totaling a possible \$69.4 million in wasted taxpayer money. At the time the County considered this deal, it could have issued variable rate debt with no swap and saved up to \$69.4 million in bank fees over the life of this bad deal. Unlike Riverside County, the City of Richmond, the City of San Francisco, and Jefferson County in Alabama have all successfully renegotiated the terms of their bank deals. To date, there is no record of the Riverside County CEO attempting to renegotiate the toxic swap deal with Wells Fargo in order to save millions that could be used for critical County services.

Safety Breaches

In response to increasingly dangerous working conditions that have been continually ignored by Riverside County management, this past April Riverside County employees hosted three days of self-defense classes at worksites across the County to equip workers with the skills needed to stay safe on the job. The self-defense classes came as a result of an assault against a nurse at the Riverside University Hospital, where a patient repeatedly slammed the nurse's head on the ground and attempted to bite her on the back of her neck until a co-worker came to her defense. Nurses at the flagship hospital, health clinics and incarceration facilities regularly endure a working environment where patients can be mentally unstable, suicidal, or homicidal – making basic safety measures indispensable. Videos and articles documenting the worker's plight against unsafe working condition and their calls on Riverside County Officials: [Thousands Deliver Petitions](#), [We Must Protect Ourselves](#), [KPFK Coverage](#), [Riverside County Employees Resort to Self Defense](#)

Riverside County management responded to the worker-organized self-defense classes with the surveillance of workers during their break time, breaking labor law to harass and spy on County employees even as deadly weapons continue to be confiscated by nurses at the hospital.

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