

## Labor Politics Group Statement on APSA Decision

July 29, 2023

Last evening, the **APSA Council** [announced](#) that they will not be honoring the request from **Unite Here Local 11** to relocate, move online, or cancel our annual meeting - a request endorsed by over [1,000 political scientists and APSA members](#). Instead, the Council has made clear that it only intends to **move some panels and events away from the hotels involved in the strike action**. This decision **respects neither Local 11's request nor the preferences and interests of a major fraction of APSA's membership and we continue to call on the leadership of our organization to move the APSA meeting online.**

While the statement—which speaks in the name of the Council, but was not approved by all its members—purports to be taking an impartial and “neutral” stance in their decision to continue with the meeting largely as planned, **they have effectively sided with the hotel management** against UNITE HERE Local 11's membership of over 15,000 workers at dozens of hotels in LA. We are also extremely disappointed to have learned through our ongoing discussions with union representatives that APSA's decision was reached **without meaningful and substantial discussions with the union**: the APSA staff leadership has yet to respond to their calls and messages.

The Council's decision **does little to resolve the uncertainty** that has surrounded the Annual Meeting since hotel owners from over 40 Los Angeles hotels let workers' contracts expire at the end of June. The situation remains highly fluid: while not all hotels are currently on strike, they may soon return to the pickets. **Indeed there is every reason to expect a large labor action across Los Angeles over Labor Day weekend, when APSA is scheduled to take place.**

The decision to move only *some panels and events* away from JW Marriott also creates further uncertainty for APSA members and panels regarding their ability to participate in the meeting, as presenters, audience members, and hotel guests. With APSA members booked to stay at many of the hotels subject to the strike,<sup>1</sup> it means that **political scientists may end up in hotels that are subject to labor action** and unable to provide essential services—or that they may return to their hotel at the end of the day to find that reaching their room means crossing a picket line. It leaves **members on panels which have not been relocated with a particularly difficult decision**. It similarly fragments the receptions, meetings, and more casual interactions with colleagues that are a crucial part of many members' reason for participating in the conference, and **places the burden of rescheduling or canceling group events on section and division chairs.**

Rather than making a collective decision on behalf of the conference—and the organization—as a whole, **the plan creates, in effect, two APSAs, forcing individual members to decide on their own how to navigate the mess.** Amidst this uncertainty, we still do not know whether those who withdraw their participation, cancel panels, or move them online, can receive refunds

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<sup>1</sup> These include the Courtyard Marriott Downtown LA, Hotel Figueroa, Hotel Indigo, InterContinental Downtown LA, JW Marriott, and the Sheraton Grand, as well as [numerous hotels across Los Angeles](#).

for registration and support for other travel costs. By leaving members in this position, the **APSA Council has abdicated their responsibility to provide leadership**, and has failed to listen to the members who mobilized quickly to support Local 11's request.

While APSA has been deliberating, **other groups have decided to cancel or postpone their events**. Most recently, the Council of State Governments (a bipartisan organization of state and local legislators) has [decided to postpone their conference](#) with one week's notice. What Local 11 asked of us was **reasonable and feasible**—and it remains so, despite APSA's claim to the contrary. While APSA has dismissed as impractical the request to cancel the conference, they have not seriously addressed the request that we instead move the conference fully online, or postpone and relocate it.

Finally, we are deeply disappointed that APSA has justified their decision by **claiming that doing what workers themselves have asked of us would somehow harm labor's interests**. In fact, the LA Federation of Labor—representing labor groups in the city—has sanctioned the strike and its call for boycotts, and is in full support of Local 11. It is equally disappointing for APSA to justify its decision **in the name of underrepresented and untenured scholars**, many of whom have chosen to stand with hotel workers despite the difficulties of doing so. While we do not discount the financial hardships and loss of professional opportunities this decision might involve, the APSA Council's failure to offer a plan of action suited to its members' needs does not alleviate these problems. For example, we have asked the APSA Council to refund the registration and membership fees for underrepresented and untenured scholars and create alternative platforms to ensure those members are not disadvantaged in job market and other professional fora.

The statement released last night is a poor representation and reflection of the values and principles of our members. It should not be the final decision with respect to our Annual Meeting. **We urge the Council to reconvene and take seriously the concerns of our members and Unite Here Local 11 and move our meeting online.**

In spite of APSA's failure to stand with LA's workers, **you and more than 1000 of your colleagues stood in solidarity with the union through our open letter**. Now is the time to keep organizing. Local 11 has asked us to keep fighting alongside them, and that's our plan.

To that end, **we ask and encourage you to take the following actions** (one or in combination):

- (1) [Contact the APSA Council](#) and tell them our request remains the same: Move the entire meeting online. This is the only way to honor Unite Here 11's request, to stand in solidarity with hotel workers, and to avoid a conference that is heavily disrupted, chaotic, and frustrating for everyone.
- (2) **Commit your panel to withdrawing from the conference if APSA Council will not reconsider:** Talk to your fellow panelists about this possibility, and if you can collectively

make this commitment, [sign up here](#). Ask your division, section, and program chairs how they plan to proceed, and encourage them to cancel events or move them online.

- (3) Make plans to hold your panel and social events online:** Should APSA Council move forward with its poorly considered plan for the Annual Meeting, cancel your hotel and travel reservations (hotel reservations booked through APSA can be canceled until July 31 without penalty, and for a cancellation fee of \$50 after that) and [request to move your panel online](#), allowing you to pursue our work as political scientists while taking a strong stand with our fellow workers who have called on us to be part of their struggle.

**UPDATE:** In contrast to what APSA announced in its initial letter, its FAQs page now includes a way for panels to move online while remaining on the program. This is the simplest mechanism if you want to honor Unite Here 11's request that we move the conference online, while still presenting your work. Early career scholars interested in coordinating for a [virtual conference entirely outside of APSA's orbit can still sign up to do so here](#) (by August 4), organized by Lauren Konken.

- (4) Support scholars:** Ask APSA to refund registration fees for precarious scholars (graduate workers, contingent and non-tenure track faculty, postdocs, etc.) and international scholars who decide not to participate in the meeting; write to your department chair to ask that your department reimburse travel expenses (including visa costs) for precarious scholars and international scholars who have canceled their APSA participation.

(**UPDATE:** APSA's most recent update includes a form for submitting refund requests here: <https://apsa.wufoo.com/forms/2023-annual-meeting-refund-request/>)

- (5) Consider donating directly to the strike fund to [support striking UNITE HERE workers](#).**

In solidarity,  
APSA Labor Politics Group