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ILLINOIS
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Court rescinds restraining order, allows striking workers to rejoin picket line

CHICAGO – Cook County Circuit Court Judge Neil Cohen on Tuesday denied a motion filed by attorneys for Community Consolidated School District 15 to prevent certain Education Support Personnel Association (ESPA) members from going on strike. Cohen also lifted a temporary restraining order (TRO), which means striking ESPA nurses and classroom aides will be able to rejoin their fellow members on the picket line.

The Illinois Education Association (IEA), ESPA's parent organization, was notified on Oct. 16 that attorneys for District 15 filed a motion for injunctive relief and a corresponding motion for a TRO seeking to prohibit 168 ESPA members from engaging in any work stoppage. The district contended that a strike by these 168 ESPA members, of the 454 total who went on strike, constituted a clear and present danger to the health or safety of the public under the *Illinois Educational Labor Relations Act* (the "IELRA"), 115 ILCS 5/13(b).

The 168 ESPA members named in the motion went back to work on Oct. 17 when the temporary restraining order was granted. The rest of ESPA's 268 members remained on the picket line.

"We've always believed our members have a legal right to go on strike, and today's court ruling reaffirms that right. The 168 who were forced back to work will rejoin their fellow members on the picket line. We are stronger together," IEA spokesperson Bridget Shanahan said. "We will continue working with District 15 to come to a fair agreement for all of our members. As hard as it is for ESPA to be away from their students and out on the picket line, they realize fighting for a living wage will help provide a better education and a better future for all children in our community."

ESPA includes nurses, classroom aides, sign language interpreters, clericals and secretaries who work with the district's most vulnerable students, including students with behavioral problems and those with special needs. ESPA is seeking a 2.5 percent wage increase for its members, many of whom make between \$11 and \$13 an hour.

There is a status hearing set for Nov. 7.

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The 135,000 member Illinois Education Association (IEA-NEA) is the state's largest education employee's organization. IEA represents preK-12 teachers outside of the city of Chicago and

education support staff, higher education faculty, retired education employees and students preparing to become teachers, statewide.