



## **LOCAL 5810**

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To the Committee Members of The Future of Voting: Accessible, Reliable, Verifiable Technology:

On behalf of UAW Local 5810, the union representing over 6,500 Postdoctoral Researchers at the University of California and Lawrence Berkeley National Lab, we write to express concern over the appointment of Columbia University President Lee Bollinger as a co-chair of your committee. As President Bollinger has engaged in a pattern of obstructing a democratic vote by graduate employees in favor of unionization, he is unfit to participate in a committee focused on ensuring the integrity of free and fair elections.

President Bollinger stated in the University press release announcing his appointment as a co-chair of your committee: "Nothing is more essential to a functioning democracy than the trust citizens have in casting their ballots." Yet, right on his own campus, he has undermined that trust by refusing to respect the validity of an overwhelmingly clear National Labor Relations Board (NLRB)-supervised unionization vote, in which 72 percent of research and teaching assistants voted in favor of unionization with a margin of nearly 1,000 votes.

As the largest group of unionized academic scientists in the United States – comprising about 10 percent of all Postdoctoral Scholars – we are deeply disappointed in President Bollinger's actions, which send a chilling and disrespectful message to scientists and other academic employees across the country.

After President Bollinger's administration filed objections attempting to nullify the results of the election, an even stronger majority of RAs and TAs signed a public letter urging him to drop the objections and start bargaining, dispelling any possible doubts as to the will of the majority. Since then, a growing number of supporters have also urged Bollinger to respect the democratic legitimacy of the overwhelming vote in December, including 168 Columbia faculty and more than 30,000 community allies. The regional NLRB rejected the University's objections "in their entirety," stating that Columbia "has failed to demonstrate that any alleged objectionable conduct occurred which could have affected the results of this election, in which the Petitioner [GWC-UAW] prevailed by more than 900 votes."

While Bollinger has continued to ignore these increasing calls to respect the democratic process at Columbia, and refuses to bargain with graduate workers through their union, our employer, the University of California, has taken a decidedly different approach. In August 2016, when a majority of Postdocs at the Lawrence Berkeley Lab voted to join our union, UC immediately sat down and began bargaining over a contract. In so doing, President Janet Napolitano demonstrated that science, research and instruction are furthered by strategic

partnership with workers and the labor movement. This makes the University workplace more democratic and inclusive, and also addresses income inequality.

As fellow academics and policy stakeholders, we support the National Academies' efforts to address critical issues, as well as your committee's timely and crucially important attention to the mechanisms of democratic choice. As you move forward on this project, we respectfully ask that you join us and encourage President Bollinger to stop ignoring the clear democratic mandate for the union at Columbia, to respect the election results, and to start negotiations for a contract.

Sincerely,

UAW Local 5810 Executive Board

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