



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: UC-AFT Leaders Attend  
Committee on Education and the Workforce Hearing  
Regarding Actions Taken by UCLA Chancellor Block**

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**What's Happening:**

Education and Workforce Committee Hearing 10:15 am EST

Press Conference Tomorrow at 12:15 pm EST

Access the live-stream here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fmwmq7DNryU>

On Thursday, May 23, UC-AFT Local 1474 President Katie Rodger and VP for Unit 18 John Branstetter joined leaders and members from CFT, UAW 4811, Rutgers AAUP-AFT, and Northwestern AAUP in Washington D.C. for the Committee on Education and the Workforce Hearing regarding actions taken by UCLA Chancellor Block and the Presidents of Rutgers and Northwestern. UC-AFT (University of California-American Federation of Teachers) represents 6,500 teaching faculty and librarians at the University of California campuses.

Thursday's hearing is the latest in a series of probes into what the Republican leadership of the committee has termed "antisemitic college chaos." In advance of the session, Chair of the Committee Virginia Foxx issued a [letter to UC administrators](#) that was full of inaccuracies, exaggerations, and contradictions, which the union leaders believe is a misrepresentation of the student encampment and events on their campus. UC-AFT and UAW 4811 leaders assert that the Ed-Workforce Committee's original April 30 summons to Block to testify heightened tensions at UCLA, motivating Block's decisions to declare the UCLA student encampment "illegal" and to call in police in direct violation of the University of California's own de-escalation policies.

"The overly broad accusations of antisemitism levied by the Education & Workforce Committee have diverted everyone's attention from the very real violence that unfolded on our campus" said John Branstetter, UC-AFT Vice President for Unit 18 teaching faculty, who was among those arrested at UCLA. "Chancellor Block failed to protect the civil rights of students, including many of Jewish descent, when he allowed a mob of violent extremists to attack the UCLA Palestine Solidarity Encampment and instead of punishing the perpetrators, he chose to inflict further harm by sending hundreds of law enforcement officers the next day. The Ed-Workforce committee and Chancellor Block have made our working conditions and our students' learning conditions unsafe."

The University of California's stated policies and practices for maintaining a safe environment for students and employees in the event of protest and civil disobedience call for minimal police presence and de-escalation. Chancellor Block altered this status quo by failing to take steps to protect student protesters from non-UCLA counter-protesters and then intentionally escalating the potential for violence by calling on law enforcement to forcibly evict protesters from the encampment. On the night and early morning of May 1-2, police in riot gear used flash bang grenades, teargas, batons and rubber bullets against protesters and ultimately arrested more than 200 people, including teaching faculty and librarian members of UC-AFT.

"There is no doubt that Chancellor Block's decision to escalate his response to the UCLA student encampment protest came on the heels of the Ed-Workforce Committee's call for him to testify," Rodger notes. "The Committee is using these hearings as a thinly-veiled platform to continue their political attack on higher education, libraries, and academic freedom. Academic freedom is a labor issue in our universities, especially for contingent faculty. We're here today to represent our members, whose experiences reflect the actual threats to higher education coming from right-wing attacks and decades of disinvestment in teaching and learning."

UC-AFT has filed unfair labor practice charges against the UC over the decisions and actions taken by Chancellor Block as well as those by chancellors at UC San Diego and UC Irvine to bring heavily-armed police to their campuses. The union will continue to fight to ensure the safety and rights of its members and the students at the University of California.

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UC-AFT is a union of 6500 teaching faculty and 360 librarians at the University of California.