

Causa Executive Director Jenny Pool Radway responds by email July 7 to questions from the Northwest Labor Press:

[Editor's note about references to 'Unidxs': Workers in the Causa bargaining unit named their union Unidxs Por La Causa, which is part of CWA Local 7901.]

The thing that's striking about the dissolution announcement is the prominent mention of the inability to reach a union agreement in paragraph two. It doesn't outright say that Causa is dissolving because of that, but it's strongly implied it was a major factor. If so, could you share what specifically about the inability to finalize a contract leads Causa to want to dissolve? Lots of employers fail to reach a union agreement but don't cease operations because of it. What's different here?

This decision was made only after long, hard consideration of all available options, including outreach to close partners to see if another organization could help. The board presented our final offer, and bargained in good faith as Causa's fiscal stewards. Early on, the board made the decision not to publicly respond to the union's statements and to instead focus on trying to finalize a contract. We wanted neither to publicly malign the union nor engage in a public conflict. However, when our board didn't respond to the inflammatory and false statement from Unidxs many in our community began to believe the false narrative that Causa was somehow anti-labor and was working to undermine unionization itself. We hoped that through mediation we might resolve the contract and move past the conflict. However, union leadership ignored repeated requests to return to negotiation or to enter mediation.

As we reached the point of spending down our reserves, it was the board's judgment that, based on the past two years of experience, we would not be able to reach an agreement nor would we be able to fundraise, recruit, or hire effectively to keep Causa going. The nature and intensity of the public pressure campaign made surmounting Causa's various challenges impossible. We have had three executive directors in three years—each a talented, immigrant Latina who was committed to ensuring negotiating a fair contract, and who ended up facing public, personal attacks.

Paragraph two also mentions a damaging public pressure campaign by the union. What specifically does that refer to, and what kind of damage was done?

Unidxs por la Causa made multiple public statements, posted and shared on social media, that accused Causa of being anti-union, engaging in "union-busting," and working to undermine the process. These accusations are false. Causa is a strong ally to labor, has supported staff's unionization from the beginning, and has never worked to undercut the union in any way. Our board has included labor representatives and labor organizers. When we needed legal counsel, we went to our allies in labor and engaged our current counsel based on their recommendation. Our differences with Unidxs por la Causa have been only over what contract terms Causa could financially sustain. We offered the best possible economic terms we believed our budget could support.

The Unidxs statements also accused Causa of negotiating in bad faith and making an

“abysmal” final offer. That is also false. We’ve shared the summary of our final offer. We believe that the offer is fair and would have supported our staff. Unfortunately, Unidxs leadership chose not to bring the contract to the staff for a vote.

Unidxs also launched a petition demanding that our current executive director resign or be fired. They also accused her, an immigrant herself, of being anti-immigrant, among other baseless charges. These attacks were false and damaged both the organization and her ability to lead.

How many employees will be laid off as a result of the dissolution?

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What allied organizations will receive funds to continue Causa’s work?

We are in conversations, and are working to finalize things. We will share as soon as we are able to ensure a smooth transition.

I understand the National Labor Relations Board was finalizing a settlement of the unfair labor practice charges that would have included a required posting. Can you confirm that, and would you want to say anything about that?

We don’t believe that we violated labor law in any way. We were willing to resolve the charges CWA/Unidxs filed through a Settlement Agreement in an attempt to move the organization forward.

We reached out to the union multiple times to resume bargaining and discuss how to implement the settlement. We sent the signed agreement to the NLRB on April 27th and reached out again on the same date to the Union. We received this response from the Union. It was the last time we had a response from the Union. We reached out to them again on May 4th sharing times we would like to meet and what we would like to meet on but to this date, have not had a reply to any email sent. CWA/Unidxs did not sign the Settlement.

Once the Board decided it was necessary to dissolve the organization, settling the charges no longer makes sense.

The closure announcement mentions two years of fundraising difficulties. Did Causa make any kind of emergency funding appeal to supporters in an effort to recover?

The board’s primary focus has been on trying to finalize a contract, and more recently on exploring avenues for continuing Causa’s programs. As noted above, it was the board’s judgment that, based on the past two years of experience, we would not be able to reach an agreement nor would we be able to fundraise, recruit, or hire effectively to keep Causa going. It’s important to note that this is a volunteer, working board with folks putting their time into the organization while having full time jobs, families and running small businesses.

Lastly, the board statement is unsigned, and the web site that formerly listed the board has been taken down. Can you tell me who’s on board that could shed further light on the statement?

At the moment the people who are on the board are as follows: Yesenia Gallardo-Avila, Aldo Medina, Ivette Heredia, Eric Delehoy, Leland Baxter-Neal, Aaron Vargas, Adriana

Barrera, and Brendan Dummigan.