

Workers in US fired for participating in pro-immigrant protests

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Workers across the US faced retaliation from their employers for participating in last Thursday's "A Day without Immigrants" protests. More than 100 workers throughout the country were fired due to their participation in the one-day event.

According to NBC, 30 workers and a foreman were fired from JVS Masonry in Commerce City, Colorado after ignoring the company owner's warnings that they would "pay the price" for not coming to work on Thursday. In addition, 25 catering service workers in Long Island, New York, 21 boat manufacturing workers in South Carolina and 18 workers at Bradley Coatings, Inc. in Nashville Tennessee were fired for similar reasons. In Oklahoma, 12 line cooks at a bar and grill were terminated for failing to call out of work, while two workers at a school in Bonita Springs, Florida were also terminated, with others quitting in protest.

Many of the terminated workers were categorized as at-will, which meant that they could be fired without warning and without reason. Many more workers likely faced more subtle forms of workplace retaliation for choosing to participate in the protest.

Last week, thousands of immigrant workers and others throughout the country stayed home, avoiding work, school, shopping and other activities as a way of showing opposition to the Trump administration's draconian anti-immigrant measures. In many locations, spontaneous protests broke out, demonstrating the advanced state of social tensions in the US due to the policies enacted by both the Democratic and Republican Parties.

Businesses provocatively sought to justify their decisions to fire protest participants, many of whom had been loyal employees for years, on grounds that their actions had left fellow co-workers shorthanded.

"If you're going to stand up for what you believe in, you have to be willing to pay the price," said JVS Masonry owner Jim Serowski to CNN. "They were warned: 'If you do this, you're hurting the company, and if you go against the team, you're not a member of the team,'" Serowski added.

Workers at I Don't Care Bar and Grill in Catoosa, Oklahoma were notified of their termination by text message, which glibly stated, "You and your family are fired. I hope you enjoyed your day off, and you can enjoy many more. Love you."

The decision to summarily fire workers for protesting met with outrage on social media, with many people, including friends and relatives of those turned out by their employers, speaking out against the companies.

"My 62 year old immigrant father, a US CITIZEN and an expert at his profession, worked for JVS Masonry since 2007. This man that I look up to (who won't even take time off for a doctor's appointment) was working 6 to 7 days a week, at times WITHOUT the [overtime] pay that he so rightfully and not to mention legally earned," stated a family member of one of the workers fired from JVS Masonry.

"Good riddance JVS Masonry, now my dad can go work for a reputable company that takes care of their employees by offering OT pay, health benefits and paid vacations, something he was never offered while staying loyal to your callous company!!!"

Another online commenter wrote in support of the workers, "I hope that each man finds a higher paying job on Monday elsewhere instead of continuing to support this business that obviously 'respects' them enough to fire them. They are MEN, not boys to cower to or be controlled by you. Your remarks suggest that they drive your bottom line (money in your business) and that you should have respected them."



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