

Marriott hotel workers strike spreads to Hawaii

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More than 2,700 hotel workers in Honolulu and Maui walked off the job on Monday, joining Marriott workers who began striking last week in the San Francisco area. Nationwide, 7,700 workers from 23 hotels are now on strike in eight cities.

Strikes are ongoing in Boston, San Francisco, San Jose, Oakland, San Diego and Detroit. Workers are demanding better pay and safer working conditions. While there is growing support for a nationwide strike, the UNITE HERE union has sought to limit and isolate the strikes, negotiating piecemeal with the bosses for separate deals with each hotel.

Workers picketed five Marriott hotels in Hawaii: Sheraton Waikiki, Royal Hawaiian, Sheraton Princess Kaiulani, Westin Moana Surfrider and Sheraton Maui. About 95 percent of the 3,500 workers in Local 5 authorized a strike last month. However, workers at Waikiki Beach Marriott and the Sheraton Kauai, who voted to strike, were still working on Monday morning.

The owners of the Hawaiian hotels, Kyo-ya Hotels & Resorts, issued a statement the same morning stating the company has “implemented contingency plans” to continue operating the five hotels on strike while adding “there have been some adjustments to staffing levels and services being offered at our properties.”

The strike in Hawaii comes after months of negotiations over job security, improved wages and work overloads. Workers also want a say in how new technological changes can improve working conditions rather than lead to the elimination of jobs.

Jenny Johnson, a dinner cook at Sheraton Waikiki for the last seven years, told *Hawaii News Now*, “We’re asking for one job to be enough,” adding, “We want a fair contract so that our members can work and afford to put food on their table and still be able to sit down and enjoy their dinner with their families.”

In a news release, the president of UNITE, Donald Taylor, declared that “UNITE-HERE union members are going to change the lives of all workers in our industry.”

In fact, the union is doing everything it can to ensure that workers are isolated and defeated. Hotel workers in Chicago have been scraping by with \$300 to \$400 a week in strike pay. Hotel workers in Detroit, who began their strike Sunday morning, are not currently receiving strike pay.

Taylor and the top executives at UNITE-HERE receive six-figure annual salaries, with Taylor alone making \$315,000, more than ten times what hotel workers make on average. Union workers also have to pay almost \$700 a year in dues.

Now that workers in Hawaii have joined the growing national hotel strike, it is critical that workers break from the isolation imposed on them by UNITE HERE and the trade unions by forming rank-and-file committees. Hotel and service workers face the same issues as UPS and Amazon workers, as well as teachers and nurses who have gone on strike this year.

Nothing can be won through isolated, individual strikes. Hotel workers should form independent workplace committees to expand the strikes, linking up the struggles of workers in different cities as part of a broader mobilization of the working class. These committees must formulate demands that meet the real needs of workers for livable wages, full healthcare coverage and job protections.



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