

“We make billions for this company, and most of us can’t pay our rent”: UPS workers speak out ahead of summer contract talks

Our reporters
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Work at UPS? Tell us what you’re fighting for in the next contract. All submissions will be kept anonymous.

Opposition is building among 350,000 UPS workers in advance of the contract expiration on July 31. Workers are determined to fight back against decades of declining wages and the company’s heavy reliance on low-paid, part-time labor in its warehouses. UPS, meanwhile, is raking in record cash as delivery volumes have skyrocketed over three years of the pandemic. Last year, the company recorded more than \$100 billion in total revenue for the first time ever, compared to \$74.4 billion in 2019.

UPS, however, is preparing to play hardball with workers in a bid to claw back even deeper concessions. The company has begun laying off or reassigning second-tier “hybrid” delivery drivers at hubs across the country, workers have reported. This classification was created in the current contract, imposed in 2018 by the Teamsters union bureaucracy over a “no” vote by the membership. Layoffs had been earlier reported in New York, Washington State, Boston and in Anaheim, California.

Wednesday morning, the *World Socialist Web Site* received tips about about even more significant layoffs, including all hybrid drivers at the Cerritos, California hub, and 150 drivers in Stanton, Pennsylvania.

Workers are gearing up for a major battle against not only the shipping giant, but against the pro-corporate union bureaucracy. Many have written into the WSWs in recent days to describe both their working conditions and what they are fighting for in the next contract. We produce a selection of these below:

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Warehouse worker from Fort Lauderdale, Florida: Working for UPS as a pre-loader has been very stressful and management is absolutely horrendous. I would never tell people to work in Hillsboro facility in Fort Lauderdale ... [management abuses] the employees with more work and forcing people to go home early so they can get bonus money. They give us a raise during peak season, and took back the raise after peak season. Most people work 20 to 23 hours a week. We should be getting more hours. They push down more work so they pay us less money. This job should start at \$20 an hour. The turnover rate is very high.

Preloader from Tulsa, Oklahoma: The union [Local 516] inside the hub is a joke. The head of this hub has had hundreds of grievances filed against him over 24 months, not to mention the countless other grievances. I’ve given up on hundreds of dollars owed me for overtime not paid to me, as filling grievances had no effect. That is the tip of an incredible iceberg of issues, including harassment, OSHA violations, etc. I’ve been at UPS for three years and pray this contract brings me to a fair playing field.

Warehouse worker from Essex County, Massachusetts: The union leaders at the Chelmsford hub are becoming vulnerable and they are playing politics with the company to benefit themselves or the company. I would like higher pay. They only have 10 top rate full-time jobs inside the building, out of 185 full-time inside jobs.

Delivery driver from Georgia: I’ve worked at UPS for 23 years and the problem is corporate greed. The CEO makes \$548 to my \$1 dollar. I dare her or anyone to justify that! We all could be millionaires and still put

\$7.5 billion in bank! It is 150-plus degrees Fahrenheit in the back of the delivery trucks and ... a company that makes 8 billion last year won't give us air conditioning in our trucks!

Worker from Sioux City, Iowa: I would really like to see part timers at UPS be treated fairly and with respect. Their wages and benefits are second- and third-level compared to full time personnel. There are more part timers employed by UPS than there are full timers, and yet in contract after contract, part timers are given table scraps (the two-tiered wage system, inferior benefits etc.) compared to the full timers. This has to stop if the Teamsters are to be believed as being for all the union personnel at UPS.

Wife of a former UPS worker from Upstate New York: My husband worked for UPS for 26 years and now he has repetitive motion disability. UPS is like modern-day slavery. My husband witnessed supervisors working, and if you do anything about it there are consequences. My husband is 48 and cannot work any labor jobs now and has been fighting for workers' compensation. The reason he is disabled is because of the limited help when you are a loader. My husband's retirement is about \$500 a month! You can't even talk to Human Resources, because they have liquidated it! So now we are financially struggling because my husband had a breakdown caused by stress from working there! Corruption is rampant there and the UNION IS WEAK!

Worker from Orange County, California: Teamsters 396 has been a poor representative for us workers. They cut bonuses for working 5 days straight from \$75 to \$45, despite the cost of living going up. They broke the contract and took cover drivers out, so now all drivers start at \$20 an hour. Seniority is a joke and not honored, not even posted at each job section like it should be. The steward is friends with management and grievances are not taken seriously.

Hazmat responder from Seattle: I am a hazmat responder at a UPS facility. I work part time. I do not get hazard pay or higher pay than a loader does, and I have much more training that I have to go through as well! We are exposed to chemicals and hazardous materials on a daily basis, and we are making a whopping 15 bucks an hour! McDonald's workers are making more than me. My teenage son, working his first job, makes more than me.

It's a slap in the face from a multi-billion dollar company! We work hard to make billions for this company, and most of us can't make our rent! Yes we have good benefits, but I can't pay the bills with it. And we have no time to to even use our medical or dental benefits. This company has a known reputation for harassment and bullying their employees. Enough is enough. The drivers are paid well, now it's our turn to get some retribution and get honest pay for honest days work! Carol Tomé [CEO of UPS], it's time to pay up! Let's talk about *your* wages!

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