

“They were giving people the goods”: UPS workers speak out against national contract as Teamsters announce ratification of Chicago local deal

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Join or provide testimony to the Rank-and-File Investigation of the UPS Contract by writing to the UPS Workers Rank-and-File Committee at upsrankandfilecommittee@gmail.com.

Only days after the International Brotherhood of Teamsters declared that a national agreement at UPS had been ratified in a vote clouded by suspicion, the union announced the passage of another deal affecting UPS workers in Chicago and the Midwest.

According to Local 710, 5,112 workers voted out of the total 7,227 eligible votes, with 3,939 workers allegedly voting in support of the agreement and 1,173 voting against. At least 2,115 did not vote.

The contract covers members of Teamsters Local 710 in Illinois, Indiana and Iowa. It and Local 705, which is also based in the Chicago area, are under separate agreements from the national contract, although they are negotiated alongside the national deal and largely patterned after it. Voting on the contract for Local 705 is ongoing and the vote will be counted on September 9.

Teamsters bureaucrats justify this unusual system, which has been in place for decades, on the grounds that it would give Chicago workers better deals. In fact, these deals have not deviated fundamentally from the national concessionary agreements imposed by the Teamsters bureaucracy over UPS rank-and-file workers. It serves only to isolate Chicago-area workers from their brothers and sisters facing the same attacks in the rest of the country.

Teamsters 710 President and Bargaining Chairman Del Schaefer declared, “This new contract is a huge win for all our members,” mirroring the fraudulent triumphalism of Teamsters General President Sean O’Brien on the national deal.

In fact, the deal maintains all the terms of the sellout national UPS-Teamsters agreement. While claiming that

workers will get “unprecedented wage increases,” both drivers and part-time workers will get below-inflation raises over the life of the contract. New part-time workers, in particular, will make only \$21 an hour, topping out at \$23 an hour at the end of the five-year agreement.

UPS workers in Local 710 also described prior to the conclusion of the vote that many workers had not received their ballots. “If the union wants more people to vote, why doesn’t the leadership in the year leading up to a contract make sure they have peoples’ current information?” one worker observed. “There are probably one-third of the people between my belt and the back belt that didn’t get a ballot. Maybe an address box at the union desk? People can fill out a card, put it in the box and then union stewards send it in like once a month.”

When the worker was told by a union official that they should talk to union stewards to address these issues, the worker replied, “We asked for a union steward. We did not get one. If you would’ve come up to the belt and explained what was happening, especially to the new people who have no idea what a union is for, you had the perfect time to do that.”

The 2018-2019 contract votes at Local 705 and 710 imposed poverty wages on workers and provoked widespread opposition from the rank and file. Such separate agreements also isolate the over 16,000 UPS workers in the strategic logistics centers in the Chicago and the Midwest areas from their brothers and sisters nationally.

One UPS driver in Local 710 told the *World Socialist Web Site*, “They were giving people the goods about having to vote. They were told this was a good deal. Some of them were happy they got a bit more money. Some of them were afraid that if they didn’t vote for it, they could lose their job. That was part of the propaganda too.

“We have to plan for next time. We should focus on rank-

and-file workers next time. They can't stop us from organizing. We need to build a coalition. We had 1,170 votes where last election we barely had any. So we have a coalition already...if we can get all those people organized, next time we can really get what we want."

More workers speak out against "ratification" of national agreement

In comments over the weekend, UPS workers continued to express their skepticism about the declared results of the national master agreement. There was also a strong interest in the investigation into the vote announced by the UPS Workers Rank-and-File Committee, which has already uncovered significant evidence which will be presented in the coming days.

In Northern Virginia, UPS workers were highly suspicious of the ratification.

"New leader, but it's the same old Teamsters" said a worker with over 20 years experience. He was particularly disgusted with the freezing of new pension contributions over the life of the contract in much of the country.

Many workers were suspicious of the last-minute surge of voting in the days before the passage's announcement. A worker who voted "no" told the WSWs, "this was the same thing that happened in 2018," when the Teamsters used an obscure clause in its constitution that required over 50 percent of membership to vote or otherwise it required two-thirds of the membership to defeat it. "Toward the end of that vote there was also a surge in 'yes' votes," which he found suspicious at the time.

"The language is vague. It seems like a lot of small talk," said a worker who expressed concern that the wage raises promised in the new contract could be redacted or changed later. She also expressed concern about the way the vote was conducted, using QR codes instead of paper ballots.

Mike, a long time driver from San Diego, said, "I wasn't happy about the contract. I voted no on everything and most of my coworkers informed me that they were also voting no." For pensions, he said, "We got a 25 cents total hourly increase for five years. At first, our local told us they weren't going to endorse how to vote either way. But then, they sent a postcard endorsing a 'yes' vote."

Mike said he thought the declared 86 percent "yes" vote was "BS," and added, "Is there really oversight in any union election? No, they're all paid off. I think the only guys I heard say 'I'm voting yes' were the 22.4 [second-tier "hybrid" drivers], which I understand that it elevates them

straight to full time. They got some advancements and protection ... But what about all the part-timers? Most of them said no. They wanted more money."

"You know the way they set that up was to give a better deal for some" in order to divide the workforce, but for those who voted yes, he added, "They don't understand the impact that's gonna have on their pension at all."

A young warehouse worker, who has been at UPS for four years, told the WSWs, "After four years I still make \$16.65 an hour. But \$21 [the starting rate under the new contract] is still not enough in San Diego. A lot of people who have been here for as long as I have should be making more than the entry level—we should be making at least \$25 an hour for seniority. We have to deal with so much volume and the conditions are terrible. It's really hot in the warehouse and they don't always have water for us."

He said work hours have been cut since the expiration of the old contract on August 1. "I used to get 4-5 hours a day but now we are only getting 3.5 hours a day. It's not enough to live on. I'm probably going to have to move back in with relatives. because even though my rent is only \$850, I can't afford it.

"It's a challenge and I can't afford to live on these wages. I eat small meals and only twice a day. I drink a lot of water when I eat to fill up my stomach so to stop the hunger."

He supports an investigation into the vote. "We all talk to each other, we have been talking about the contract and how we voted, there's no way 86 percent voted yes."

Paula, a cover driver in San Diego, said she didn't even bother voting because she didn't believe in the contract. "Why would you accept the first thing offered to you? It's like buying a car, you never agree to the first thing you're offered. There was way more money than what was there."

Another worker from San Diego, Andrew, said he supports the investigation. "When I saw the 86 percent, I thought it was BS. They're trying to take our pension. That's how everyone I talk to feels about the contract. It's suspicious."



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