

Fort Worth Coors workers reject company contract, authorize strike

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14 February 2024

Work at Coors? Tell us what your working conditions are like by filling out the form below. All submissions will be kept anonymous.

Workers at the Molson Coors brewery in Fort Worth, Texas, voted by 93 percent on Sunday to turn down a contract offer by the company and authorize strike action. Details of the contract offer have not been made public, but Teamsters Local 997 secretary-treasurer Rick Miedema claimed the \$7 million Coors paid to run an ad during the Super Bowl was “double or more of the package we had on the table to get the contract settled.” There are 420 members of Teamsters 977 at the Coors brewery out of a workforce of 520.

Like its competitor Anheuser-Busch, which is also facing possible strike action by 5,000 Teamsters in the coming weeks, Coors operates a global network of highly profitable brands. Beyond the Coors and Molson brands, Molson Coors owns Pilsner Urquell, Blue Moon, Topo Chico, Grolsch and dozens of other brands. The facility in Fort Worth is the only brewery in the southwest United States that services brands such as Miller Lite, Coors Light, Yuengling, PBR and Topo Chico.

Coors’ revenue is its highest since 2005 (the year Coors and Molson merged) with more than \$3.5 billion dollars in profit each year since 2017. In 2023 it announced a \$2 billion stock buyback from shareholders.

According to a company fact sheet on the Fort Worth facility, workers make an average of \$36 an hour, or about \$70,000 a year. This is slightly under the median household income for the Fort Worth area. However, Coors does not specify if this is base pay or if it includes shift differentials and average overtime from the excessive workloads that Coors workers can be shouldered with.

Speaking of their experience at Coors’ flagship facility in Golden, Colorado, a worker wrote on Reddit that workers often had to work 75 hours or more a week.

They said, “When I got hired, I was told I would be working their ‘4x4’ schedule [four days on, four days off], rather it usually ends up being 6x2 or 7x1, because 90% of the time on your scheduled ‘days off,’ you’ll get called in by management and they will force you to come in. If you don’t answer the phone they’ll leave a message saying you have to call them back. If you don’t, you’ll get a write-up when you do go back to work and after so many, you’ll get suspended, and then fired. (Happened multiple times to my co-workers while I was there).

“I worked in the fermentation department and while I was there during my 2 years as a Coors employee I have never been more miserable and depressed. The 4x4 schedule is supposed to be a 4 days on 4 days off work schedule, but you rarely get those 4 days off. Yeah, you’ll get [overtime], but you end up working MULTIPLE days of 12+ hour shifts [each] day, and ends up being a 75+ hour work weeks. THEN, they rotate every two weeks from day shifts to night shifts, so in some instances you’ll work a 75 hours week on nights then get forced in before the start of your day rotation, so your body has no idea what the hell is going on.”

The facility in Golden is no longer unionized. The union was decertified in 1978 after a failed strike that coincided with a decades-long boycott against Coors for its discriminatory practice. The AFL-CIO called off its support for the boycott in exchange for a union vote at the Golden brewery in 1988, which the Teamsters union lost.

But conditions are similar at the Fort Worth brewery

under the Teamsters. Another poster on Reddit wrote of their experience interviewing for a job at the Fort Worth brewery where they were told they should expect to work 16-hour days with mandatory overtime on a regular basis, adding that “Everyone just seemed miserable there. Dead.”

According to the Fort Worth report the Teamsters have presented the company with a “last, best and final” offer and a Teamsters’ official announced that strike pay for Coors workers would be increased to \$1,000 a week if they strike.

The increase in strike pay for this contract is a sign that the Teamsters feel they must make a show at Coors after their “historic” contract with UPS has been shown to be nothing of the sort. UPS announced 12,000 layoffs at the beginning of the year and is closing down sorting shifts inside warehouses across the country.

Attempting to lend a militant tone to the negotiations, Teamsters General President Sean M. O’Brien said in a press release, “The Molson Coors brewery in Fort Worth will shut down if a strong new contract is not reached, and the executives of yet another greedy beer giant will have no one to blame but themselves. Teamsters across the brewery industry are standing shoulder-to-shoulder. It doesn’t matter if it’s Molson Coors, Anheuser-Busch, or anyone else—these corporations cannot keep taking for themselves, shoveling money to Wall Street, and leaving the workers who make the products out in the cold. Teamsters know the value of our labor and we are not afraid to withhold it to get the contract we have earned.”

O’Brien is the last person who can speak on such matters. After serving as Jimmy Hoffa Jr.’s right-hand man, where he oversaw the enforcement of a pro-company contract at UPS against a no-vote by UPS workers, O’Brien has attempted to recast himself as a reformer as part of his election campaign in 2021.

However, since assuming leadership of the Teamsters he has demonstrated he is just another bureaucrat. In the past few years he has directed the sellout of rail workers, of UPS workers again last year, allowed 22,000 Yellow workers to be laid off and has courted the fascist Trump for a presidential nomination.

The central issues for brewery workers, particularly the grueling long hours and extensive mandatory overtime, are akin to the demands of rail workers for

sick leave and to end vindictive attendance policies. O’Brien’s collusion with the Biden administration culminated in a block on strike action and the enforcement of a pro-company contract that failed to meet workers’ needs.

Workers at Coors cannot expect anything more than what the Teamsters gave to the rail workers: nothing. They must take their struggle into their own hands and unite with their fellow brewery workers at Anheuser-Busch, putting the rank-and-file in control of their contract struggle instead of the pro-corporate Teamsters bureaucracy.



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