

Airport concession workers at 18 US airports in strike authorization votes

Workers Struggles: The Americas

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The World Socialist Web Site invites workers and other readers to contribute to this regular feature.

Latin America

On the tenth anniversary of the disappearance of 43 student teachers enrolled in the Ayotzinapa Normal College in Guerrero State, more than 10,000 people marched in Mexico City. The students were forcibly abducted in Iguala on September 26, 2014 as they traveled to the capital city to mark the anniversary of the military violence against protesters in Mexico City in 1968, known as the Tlatelolco Massacre.

At a rally in Zocalo Square, a parent of one of the victims declared, “No matter who heads the government, no matter how much they criticize us, or block our way, we will keep on demanding that all 43 appear alive.” Parents reminded everyone that President Lopez Obrador never fulfilled his pledge to find the disappeared students. At the end of the protests, students chanted, “They were alive when they took them, alive is how we want them. September 26 will never be forgotten.”

United States

Some 2,700 airport concession workers at 18 airports across the United States are voting on whether to grant strike authorization as their contract with the company

Delaware North expires October 31. About 70 concession workers at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport in Minnesota voted by a 100 percent margin this past week to give the go-ahead for a strike.

In August, Delaware North workers at the Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and Austin, Texas, airports granted majority votes for a strike. Other airports due to vote are Boise, Charleston, Detroit, Midland, Nashville, New Orleans, Orlando, Richmond, Syracuse, Tampa, Tucson and Tulsa.

Unite Here surveyed their members and released a report documenting the difficulties workers face. Wages range from \$14.90 an hour in Tulsa to \$20.89 in Denver. “One in two said that they have been unable to afford their housing costs in the past year, over a quarter (26%) report that they have struggled to afford food for themselves and their families, and 22% said they have skipped meals to save money,” stated the report. Fifteen workers said they had been evicted from housing in the last year.

Delaware North, headquartered in Buffalo, New York, is a multinational food service and hospitality company that employs 55,000 workers and brings in \$3.2 billion in annual revenues. Chairman Jeremy Jacobs Sr. is a billionaire, ranked by *Forbes* as the 481st richest person in the world.

The union covering 4,000 flight attendants at Frontier Airlines announced September 18 that their members had voted by a 99.6 percent margin to strike the Denver, Colorado-based carrier as a new business model implemented by the company has further undermined living standards.

The new plan, called “out-and-back,” means attendants work a one-day round-trip flight in a single

shift. The policy eliminates multi-day trips that involve paid overnight stays and results in less pay for already struggling union members at the budget airline.

The Association of Flight Attendants-CWA filed a notice under the Railway Labor Act (RLA) in April to remove the business model change from the collective bargaining discussion and to resolve it through legal proceedings.

Negotiations are not currently being conducted under federal mediation, an initial requirement in the chain of circumstances that eventually would permit a strike. Mediated talks would have to meet an impasse, followed by a cooling-off period before the union could contemplate a strike.

About 1,500 concessions workers at three Philadelphia stadiums have been on strike against Aramark Corporation since September 23 seeking wages and healthcare benefits. The workers, members of Unite Here Local 274, are paid at different wage rates at Citizens Bank Park, Lincoln Financial Field and Wells Fargo Center despite working for the same company.

“This used to be a really great and fun place to work,” striker Ashley Brady told *Phillies Nation*. But this had been undermined by Aramark. “Years of penny raises. Years of denying offering healthcare. Years of unfair working conditions.”

Some workers work at all three venues but are not allowed by Aramark to combine their hours in order to qualify for healthcare benefits. An entry level wage at Wells Fargo Center is \$14.11 an hour. At Lincoln Financial Field that entry level wage is \$16.50 an hour.

Canada

A four-day strike by 600 workers that had begun to significantly impact grain shipments from Canada’s interior to the Port of Vancouver ended last week after the Grain Workers Elevator Association finalized a federally mediated contract settlement with the Vancouver Elevators’ Association. The union will recommend that the membership accept the terms of the deal. A vote on the tentative agreement is scheduled for October 4. Workers are demanding a significant wage

increase to defend their living standards against the spike in inflation over recent years.

Immediately after the strike began, grain growers associations across the Canadian prairies called for a quick end to the dispute. Over half of the grain harvested in the country makes its way to the Vancouver terminals for global shipping destinations. About \$35 million per day would be lost due to the strike action, said the growers’ association as they called on Federal Labour Minister Steven MacKinnon to intervene to end the strike.



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