

Three US governors issue joint statement demanding end to Boeing strike

Bryan Dyne
30 October 2024

To join the Boeing Workers Rank-and-File Committee, text (406) 414-7648, email boeingworkersrffc@gmail.com or fill out the form at the end of this article.

On Tuesday, the governors of Missouri, Montana and Utah issued a joint letter to Boeing and the International Machinists Association (IAM) bureaucracy demanding that they bring an end to the ongoing strike of 33,000 Boeing machinists.

“The strike has far-reaching implications in our states,” governors Mike Parson, Greg Gianforte and Spencer Cox declared. “Boeing has stopped buying from most suppliers, most of whom are now making the very difficult decision to furlough or lay off their own employees.” The company has 368 suppliers in Missouri, 32 suppliers in Montana, and 139 in Utah, employing more than 16,000 people in just those three states.

The attempt to pose as concerned about workers’ jobs in their states is not only totally hypocritical coming from right-wing Republicans, it also amounts to economic blackmail. Boeing has already announced 17,000 global layoffs in retaliation against the strike and to make its workers pay for the massive safety crisis caused by its profit-driven cost cutting.

But the letter is also an indication of the deep concern among all layers of the American bourgeoisie of the economic and geopolitical impact of the strike. Boeing is one of the largest US corporations and a major exporter and a significant defense contractor, with the strike impacting US war plans against Iran, Russia and China.

What worries the ruling class the most, however, is the potential that the strike will encourage other workers to enter into struggle, especially after last week’s rejection of a contract brokered by the Biden

White House. The next day, workers at Eaton Aerospace also rejected a tentative agreement, staying out on the line with their brothers and sisters at Boeing.

The letter shows that, whatever insincere posturing by Trump and the Republicans over the Democrats’ economic record in the leadup to the November elections, both parties are bitterly hostile to the working class. Trump and the Republicans are attempting to build a fascist movement, utilizing right-wing populism as a political screen for establishing a dictatorship which will be directed above all against the working class.

All three signatories are extreme-right figures associated with attacks on core democratic rights. Last month, Parsons refused to halt the execution of Marcellus Williams, who spent nearly 25 years on Missouri’s names for death row for a 1998 stabbing that he did not commit.

Last year, Gianforte pushed through a bipartisan law to ban the social media platform TikTok in Montana, in a flagrant violation of the First Amendment of the Constitution. A federal Tiktok ban passed through Congress earlier this year with bipartisan support and was signed into law by President Biden. In August, Spencer signed a law banning 13 books in Utah that advocated for the rights of gay and transgender youth.

And all three joined Texas Governor Greg Abbott at the start of the year to denounce an “invasion” of immigrants and send National Guard troops to the border, usurping federal control of immigration.

The Democrats, meanwhile, are incapable of mounting a genuine defense of democracy against Trump because their sole fixation is on the war question, with which they have tactical differences with the Republicans. Biden’s domestic policy has centered on using the trade union bureaucracy to enforce labor

peace and prepare American society for war.

In opposition to the bipartisan effort to crush the resistance of workers, workers must organize around a new strategy, based on the complete independence of Boeing workers from both parties and from the pro-corporate bureaucracy. Workers must mobilize to transfer power from the corrupt IAM apparatus, which is in bed with both management and the government, to the shop floor, combining this with an appeal for wide support in the working class for the strike.

This was the perspective of the Boeing Workers Rank-and-File Committee laid out at a public meeting on Sunday at which workers from the US and around the world called for “the broad mobilization of workers across industry and across geographic lines” and for “structures of struggle that enable us to combine resistance against redundancies and social cuts with a struggle against war.”

Wall Street backs Boeing as it preps fire sale of assets

The strike is already having a powerful financial impact on Boeing, already weakened because of the safety scandal. According to a report from the Anderson Economic Group cited by the website Quartz, the strike has so far cost Boeing \$9.7 billion. Boeing’s stock is down 41 percent since the beginning of the year, including a 5 percent downturn since the beginning of the strike in September.

Boeing’s financial crisis has been compounded by the failure of its Starliner spacecraft, which did not complete its mission to return astronauts from the International Space Station to Earth after several helium leaks were discovered before and after launch, and one of its five thrusters failed.

NASA has since announced that it has removed the Starliner from its schedule for currently planned crewed missions to space, relying solely on the SpaceX Crew Dragon spacecraft. The announcement ballooned Boeing’s losses on the Starliner program another \$250 million, to a total of \$1.9 billion on the program since it was initially awarded the NASA contract for the spacecraft in 2014.

The aerospace giant has also been looking to offload its share of United Launch Alliance (ULA) for the past 18 months, valued at somewhere between \$2 and \$3 billion. ULA was formed in 2006 as a joint venture between Boeing and Lockheed Martin to coordinate the launch of the Atlas and Delta rocket families. However, as of this year, the Delta rockets, Boeing’s contribution to the company, have been retired in favor of the newly developed Vulcan Centaur model.

Boeing is attempting to sell off assets to weather the strike. In the aftermath of the vote to reject the second contract and to prop up Boeing’s balance sheet, the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission approved a sale of 90 million common stock shares of its stock and \$5 billion depository shares, which Boeing announced Monday.

While the value of the common stock shares has yet to be set, it is estimated that Boeing will raise between \$19 billion and \$22 billion.

The purchase of these shares will amount to Wall Street pumping Boeing with the resources it needs to outlast the workers. These funds are in addition to the \$10 billion loan from a variety of banks secured by Boeing to prop up its cash flow and avoid a downgrade of its credit to junk status.

Meanwhile, the IAM is starving workers out on the picket line with \$250 in weekly strike pay, while top officials continue to draw six-figure salaries from the union’s \$300 million in assets.

When the announcement was first made in mid-October that Boeing intended to sell stock, the Boeing Workers Rank-and-File Committee demanded that strike pay be tripled to \$750 “to show them we mean business. The strike fund is the property of the rank and file, not the union bureaucrats, and those resources are needed especially now that Boeing has an extra \$35 billion from its Wall Street backers.”

The Committee concluded, “Preparations must be made for mass industrial action. The whole of corporate America is lining up behind Boeing; the working class must line up behind us.”



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact