

Hundreds of New York Times technology workers go on strike, disrupting US election coverage

Stephen Parker, George Marlowe
5 November 2024

Are you a tech worker at the New York Times or another workplace? Tell us why you are fighting and the conditions you face by filling out the form below.

On Monday morning, one day before the US elections, hundreds of technology workers at the *New York Times* launched a multi-day strike to fight for higher pay raises, improved working conditions and to oppose discriminatory performance management practices.

Over 600 software engineers, product managers, digital designers and other tech workers—the core team sustaining the *New York Times*' digital infrastructure—walked off the job Monday and set up pickets outside the company headquarters.

The timing of the strike, coming just one day before the pivotal 2024 US elections, underscores the important role these workers play in supporting the news giant's digital reach. Organized by the *New York Times* Tech Guild, an affiliate of the Communication Workers of America (CWA), the strike is one of the first major work stoppages by technology workers.

A statement by the Guild noted that the workers are demanding “fair, equitable pay, job security, and protected hybrid/remote work.” Over 95 percent of the tech workers voted to authorize a strike. Management's latest offer includes a 2.5 percent annual wage increase, a 5 percent pay increase for promotions and a \$1,000 ratification bonus.

“The disrespect has reached a new low,” Sarah Duncan, a staff engineer, said on Twitter/X prior to the strike. “NYT execs better come to their senses and bargain like their products rely on it—since we are the ones who make and maintain them and we've authorized a strike!”

The strike has the potential to disrupt the *Times*' high-stakes news cycle coverage of the 2024 US elections, including the presidential and congressional races, bringing into sharp relief the dependence of the paper's most essential operations on its tech workforce.

For readers of the *Times*, the walkout shuts down many

digital tools that make the publication's election coverage possible. Its digital architecture, maintained by these tech workers, delivers real-time election results, interactive maps, and in-depth data visualization, which the media company is known for.

The tech workers also support key software platforms on the *Times*, such as its gaming apps like *Wordle* and the crossword puzzle, its cooking platform and its podcast and other apps.

The strike is all the more significant given the role played by the *Times*, the so-called “newspaper of record,” as one of the central instruments of ruling class propaganda for over a century.

In recent decades, the *Times* has played a key role in imperialist war propaganda—from the criminal invasion of Iraq to the US-backed Israeli genocide in Gaza and the US-NATO proxy war in Ukraine—and in falsifying history, including the discredited 1619 Project.

A year of frustrations boiling over

The tech workers' fight at the *New York Times* is emblematic of a larger crisis engulfing the media and tech industries, as well as the broader jobs bloodbath taking place in the auto industry and other sectors. Across all these industries, workers face the brunt of management-driven cost-cutting, which manifests as stagnant wages, escalating workloads and job insecurity.

But workers are fighting back, including the courageous strike of over 33,000 Boeing workers and other workers on strike at defense and aerospace companies like Eaton.

Kait Hoehne, a *Times* web engineer, wrote on X/Twitter last month, “We are asking for reasonable things that would make a huge quality-of-life improvement for our members:

remote work protections, layoff protections, more affordable health care, reasonable annual raises.”

She added, “The *New York Times* has been wildly successful over the last few years, in large part due to our unit’s hard work, but we are consistently squeezed—pushed to produce as much as possible for as little as possible.”

Shares of the *Times* fell over 7.7 percent on Monday due to the strike, despite posting a 7 percent increase in quarterly revenue, centrally through its digital operations and subscribers. Net profit rose over 20 percent to \$64.1 million in the third quarter. The publication gained over 260,000 paid subscribers last quarter, with a total of over 5 million paid subscribers to many of its key platforms for news, cooking, games and reviews.

“We are denied promotions, fired without cause,” Hoehne added. “The women and people of color in our unit experience wage gaps and unfair performance reviews. We can work to resolve these issues as a unit. We deserve a fair deal, and we deserve it now.” One tech worker was fired and retaliated against days before a brain surgery.

The tech workers at the *Times* have faced over a year of stalled bargaining, with management allegedly using delay tactics and other means to avoid coming to an agreement. The bargaining impasse has led to accusations by workers and supporters that the media company’s executives are fundamentally unwilling to recognize the rights and contributions of their tech workforce, who play an essential role in delivering the digital infrastructure that allows the *Times* to operate.

In recent years, mass layoffs have swept through major tech and media companies, with corporations prioritizing profits and shareholder returns over workforce stability. Over 1,100 *Times* workers previously went on strike in 2022.

Despite posting substantial profits in 2023, the *New York Times* has resisted paying its tech workers wages that align with industry standards. The decision to go on strike speaks to a shared sense of anger felt by many workers who see their contributions as vital yet undervalued.

Tech workers have not limited their opposition just to mass layoffs in recent years but have also spoken out against the US-Israeli genocide in Gaza.

One Microsoft tech worker Hossan Nassr was recently fired for protesting the genocide and the complicity of technology companies in war and genocide. “I was fired from Microsoft,” Nassr said in a viral tweet, “hours after a vigil we organized to honor and remember the lives of Palestinians killed by American-funded and Microsoft-empowered Israeli genocide.”

The role of the NewsGuild and the CWA

It is critical that *Times* workers must understand the role of the CWA union bureaucracy, given the CWA’s sellout of AT&T workers. The NewsGuild, part of the CWA, bargains on behalf of roughly 3,000 media professionals in New York, including both editorial and technology staff at the *Times*.

In the case of AT&T, the CWA leadership pushed through a contract that many workers felt was inadequate and failed to address their core demands. This betrayal shows that the CWA, and by extension the NewsGuild, cannot be relied upon to support a genuine fight for tech workers’ rights at the *Times*.

To fight for their demands and to prevent a sellout by the union bureaucracy, *Times* workers should form rank-and-file committees, organizations directly led by workers. Such committees would enable workers to democratically control their struggle, preventing the union leadership from making concessions that fail to meet their needs. Rank-and-file committees would place decision-making power in the hands of the workers themselves, allowing them to assess and guide their strategy without fear of a compromise or any betrayals by the CWA leadership, and make a turn to broader sections of the working class.

The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) has advocated the formation of rank-and-file committees to empower workers to take control of their struggles. With the *Times* management showing little willingness to address workers’ core demands, the formation of rank-and-file committees can serve as a powerful counterweight, allowing workers to push forward without interference or dilution of their demands.

Ultimately, this strike is more than a dispute over wages and working conditions. Workers at the *Times* have to also come to terms with the role of the publication as a central organ of propaganda for the capitalist ruling class today.

The outcome of this important tech workers strike will also reverberate across the technology and media industry. This fight, and its implications, extend beyond the *Times* to tech and media workers everywhere, as well as broad sections of the working class who are facing the brunt of the attacks by the ruling class on their living standards and working conditions.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact