

# Boeing workers: Organize to expand the strike under rank-and-file control!

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*For more information about rank-and-file committees, visit [wsws.org/workers](https://wsws.org/workers).*

The strike by more than 3,200 Boeing defense workers in St. Louis, St. Charles and Mascoutah is a direct clash of irreconcilable social forces.

On one side stands Boeing management, the American state and the union bureaucracy, determined to defend the profits of one of the world's most powerful and politically connected corporations. On the other stands the working class, whose fight for decent wages, job security and safe conditions is inseparably bound up with the struggle against the drive to world war.

This strike marks a significant stage in the developing confrontation between the American ruling class and the working class. Across the country, mass anger is building over stagnant wages, the destruction of pensions, unsafe working conditions and rising prices fueled by tariffs and the costs of militarism.

These economic grievances cannot be separated from the political reality: The corporate oligarchy rules through both Democrats and Republicans, and it is mobilizing all the resources of the state for war abroad and repression at home.

Boeing is at the center of the military-industrial apparatus. The company is the second-largest defense contractor in the United States and a critical pillar of American imperialism's global operations. Its St. Louis plants produce F-15, F/A-18 and T-7A fighter jets and MQ-25 refueling drones, which are being used or prepared for use in the criminal wars in Gaza and Ukraine, and in the US military's escalating preparations for war with China.

The mobilization of American society for war production depends on the brutal exploitation of defense workers, whose labor is being used for the aims

of global conquest.

Boeing's corporate leadership consist of criminals who knowingly concealed deadly design flaws in the 737 MAX airliner, leading to the deaths of 346 people in two crashes. No executive was ever held accountable, while whistleblowers who spoke out have died in suspicious circumstances.

The F-47 contract, handed to Boeing by the Trump administration, was effectively a bailout to shield the company's bottom line from the fallout of the scandal. Boeing has the full backing of Wall Street and Washington, which will give management every opportunity to break the strike.

Boeing is relying upon the bureaucrats of the International Association of Machinists (IAM) to limit and ultimately defeat the strike. The IAM has already begun laying the groundwork for a betrayal. The IAM's public call for Republican Senator Josh Hawley, a fascist and January 6 coup supporter, to "stand with" the strikers is a declaration of the bureaucracy's political orientation.

The IAM is appealing to the extreme right wing of the political establishment, which is just as committed to war, corporate interests and the destruction of workers' rights as the Democrats. This is part of a broader corporatist alliance between the unions, the state and big business to enforce war production and suppress opposition.

Workers' real allies are not warmongering politicians from either party, but the working class of the United States and the world.

The 2024 strike by 33,000 Boeing commercial aircraft workers in Washington and Oregon offers critical lessons. Then, as now, workers confronted not only the corporation but also the IAM bureaucracy, which blocked the expansion of the strike, kept workers

in the dark during closed-door talks, and pushed through a sellout agreement.

That contract included wage increases below inflation, preserved the two-tier pension system and failed to address unsafe workloads. Unless workers take control of their own struggle, the same outcome will be imposed in St. Louis.

The IAM's strategy of appealing to capitalist politicians and keeping the strike isolated is recipe for defeat. Boeing workers must turn to their real allies: workers in other defense plants, commercial aerospace facilities and industries throughout the region and internationally.

This requires the formation of an independent Boeing St. Louis Rank-and-File Committee to take the conduct of the strike out of the hands of the bureaucracy and into the democratic control of workers themselves.

The WSWS proposes workers adopt the following program:

- Quadruple strike pay to \$800 per week, backdated to day one of the strike. Workers are fighting one of the world's most powerful corporations and must be adequately provisioned to sustain a long battle. To free up resources, all non-essential IAM staff should be furloughed for the duration of the strike.

- Rank-and-file control over the picket lines. Organize "flying pickets" to other Boeing facilities, suppliers and manufacturing plants across the region to broaden the struggle. Make direct appeals for solidarity to Boeing's global workforce and to workers everywhere.

- Rank-and-file control, not mere "oversight," of all negotiations. All talks—including side discussions—must be livestreamed and open to all workers. Demand the release of all communications between the IAM, the White House and other political figures. No secret deals or hidden concessions!

- Restoration of pensions and substantial wage increases to make up for years of lost pay and to protect against inflation. End all tiers in pay and benefits.

Fight against the American war machine. Demand the retooling of military production lines for socially beneficial purposes—mass transit, renewable energy equipment, hospital machinery—rather than weapons of mass destruction.

- Workers' control over safety and production. Empower rank-and-file committees to halt unsafe practices, prevent injuries and deaths, and ensure

production is organized to meet human needs, not corporate profit.

- Full legal immunity for all strikers. No victimization, no blacklisting, and no reprisals for any worker involved in strike action or solidarity activity.

This strike can and must become the spearhead of a broader movement of the working class against war, austerity and the dictatorship of the corporations. It is part of a global process: autoworkers in Mexico, rail workers in Britain, defense workers in Australia and others are confronting the same conditions. The fight at Boeing is their fight, and their fight is yours.

The outcome will not be decided in polite appeals to right-wing politicians or in secret talks with management. It will be decided by the mobilization of the working class itself, armed with a socialist program to take economic and political power out of the hands of the capitalist elite and place it under the democratic control of working people.



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