

# After shutting down JBS strike in Greeley, Colorado, UFCW pushes through contract 30 cents better than management's initial offer

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Over the weekend, the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 7 ratified a new contract for 3,800 workers at the JBS beef processing plant in Greeley, Colorado. The deal runs retroactively from July 2025 through April 2028.

The agreement addresses none of the workers' demands which led to a powerful three-week strike. It was the largest US meatpacking strike in more than 60 years. Workers at the plant account for more than 6 percent of all US beef processing.

The UFCW bureaucracy, after isolating the strike as much as possible, shut it down on April 4 without a deal. The present contract was announced a week later, giving workers little time to study and discuss among themselves before voting.

Local 7 President Kim Cordova hypocritically declared: "These workers stood together on the picket line for three weeks because they knew their worth and refused to be disrespected. Today, that sacrifice has been rewarded." Cordova claimed that the "contract is significantly different [from the company's last offer]. It is material."

In fact, JBS spokesperson Nikki Richardson said in a press release that it "reflects the same economic framework JBS USA presented in its Last, Best and Final offer."

Instead of a meager 60 cent per hour raise in the first year of the contract, JBS and Local 7 agreed to a 70 cent increase, an improvement of only 10 cents over the initial offer. During the second and third years of the contract, the initially proposed 30 cent increases were likewise raised by 10 cents to 40 cents per hour.

Assuming that plant employees work an eight hour day—even though most shifts actually have fewer

hours—each worker would only receive an additional \$5.60 per day before taxes during the first year of the agreement. After the second and third year increases, JBS Greeley workers would see an aggregate \$12 increase per day, only 40 cents more than the current average price of a meal at a Colorado McDonald's.

The agreement also contains no retroactive pay increase in spite of the last contract with JBS expiring in July 2025. Instead, the company, which has a market capitalization of \$19.4 billion and made a net profit of \$415 million in the fourth quarter of 2025 alone, is providing workers with an insulting \$750 contract ratification bonus and a \$500 one-time payment to workers in April 2027, provided that contract re-openers are not triggered to cancel it.

These latter payments were likely a factor in pressuring an approval vote as most plant workers are struggling to make ends meet in expensive areas of Eastern Colorado where the average rent stands at nearly \$1,600 per month, not to mention the rising costs of fuel and other necessities as a result of tariffs and the war against Iran.

With the current average pay of Greeley JBS workers at \$26 per hour, the 70 cent first year increase only improves an average JBS worker's salary by 2.7 percent, equivalent to the current Colorado inflation rate. This means that JBS workers will receive no effective wage increase. It also leaves them at twice the federal poverty level for a family of three.

The agreement also does not provide a pension plan for workers similar to the one at 14 other JBS plants. Instead, it retains the legacy 401(k) plan. Cordova and the UFCW leadership claimed this was a win for workers.

The agreement, however, does require the company to reimburse employees for the cost of replacing protective gear, although the enforcement mechanism for these reimbursements is deliberately left vague. Many workers had complained that the company would regularly dock their pay for lost protective gear, which they believed were sometimes stolen by their fellow workers who wished to avoid garnishments of their own.

However, aside from this largely toothless provision, the contract does nothing whatsoever to improve worker safety.

Workers who spoke with WSWS reporters on the picket line consistently relayed horror stories of grievous injuries suffered either by themselves or close coworkers. Many of these were due to unsafe line speeds and the complete lack of any breaks for multiple hours at a time.

This led to slashes, burns and even dismemberment, while management refused to shut down the line. Numerous cases of nausea, temporary blindness and vomiting have been reported due to improper chemical usage. Six workers also died of COVID-19 in the first year of the pandemic.

With this contract, UFCW bureaucrats are complicit in furthering injuries and even deaths, which are likely to ensue. They sabotaged the struggle in a period of escalating class struggle.

The Trump administration is preparing for a renewed offensive in its genocidal war against Iran and is expecting the trade union apparatus to fall into line as it demands harsh discipline on the factory floor. The UFCW, in the latest Greeley agreement, has thus dutifully played its assigned role.

At the same time that Local 7 reached its agreement with JBS, the United Teachers of Los Angeles, Associated Administrators of Los Angeles and SEIU Local 99 also reached a last-minute agreement with the Los Angeles Unified School District to block a strike of more than 70,000 school workers.

This all makes the formation of independent rank-and-file committees an urgent necessity for workers both in the US and internationally. The trade union apparatus acts as nothing more than an appendage of the corporations, pacifying worker resistance and ensuring that obscene profits remain unimpeded in the midst of escalating war and dictatorship.

Workers at Greeley and beyond must instead take up their own struggle for decent pay, benefits and safe working environments. Information on forming a rank-and-file committee can be found by clicking on the link here.



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