Boeing engineers and technical workers reject contract, vote to authorize strike

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Nearly 17,000 engineers, scientists, technicians, analysts and designers at Boeing voted last Friday to reject two contract offers unanimously endorsed by the Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace (SPEEA) negotiation team and to authorize strike action. The contracts, covering workers across Washington and Oregon and at sites in California and Utah, expire October 6. The earliest a strike could begin is October 7.

Workers in the 13,000-member Professional Unit rejected the offer by 64.25 percent and authorized a strike by 87.82 percent. Technical Unit workers rejected their offer by 71.87 percent and authorized a strike by 89.71 percent. More than 92 percent of eligible voters cast ballots across the two units.

The SPEEA negotiation team unanimously endorsed and promoted Boeing's offers, and the union brought them before the membership for ratification. The Technical Bargaining Unit Council recommended rejection, while the Professional council issued no recommendation after failing to reach the required 60 percent threshold. These positions indicated that sections of the apparatus knew the contracts would be deeply unpopular and sought to avoid completely discrediting themselves when workers voted them down.

The vote is the third major act of defiance by Boeing workers in three years. Its most immediate precedent is the 2024 strike by 33,000 machinists in Washington, Oregon and California. That struggle began as a rank-and-file rebellion against an agreement endorsed by the International Association of Machinists, which workers rejected by 95 percent before voting by 96 percent to strike.

The 53-day walkout halted most Boeing commercial-aircraft production in the Pacific Northwest and demonstrated workers' immense industrial power. It also exposed enormous hatred for the IAM apparatus. Workers publicly denounced officials as "sold out" and "spineless" while the bureaucracy paid only $250 a week in strike benefits, isolated the walkout from simultaneous aerospace strikes and repeatedly forced votes on agreements that failed to restore pensions or meet the demand for a 40 percent wage increase. The IAM finally forced through a sellout by 59 percent after Boeing threatened that further offers would be worse and the Biden White House intervened through acting Labor Secretary Julie Su.

In 2025, 3,200 St. Louis-area defense workers rejected four Boeing offers and struck for 15 weeks. The IAM again isolated them, initially paid only $200 a week and allowed Boeing to starve them into submission. The five-year agreement that ended the strike contained a 24 percent wage increase—worse than the company's initial 20 percent over four years—and failed to restore pensions, fix the wage progression or provide the sought improvements to health care and the 401(k).

These experiences pose the decisive question before SPEEA members: who will control the coming struggle? The Boeing Workers Rank-and-File Committee, formed before the 2024 strike, fought the IAM's isolation and sellouts. Engineers and technicians must join and expand it throughout their own workplaces before any strike begins.

Their position gives them immense power. These workers design aircraft and tooling, conduct stress and structural analysis, write and certify software, plan production, investigate quality failures and approve engineering documentation. Some serve in Boeing's Organization Designation Authorization unit, carrying out certification functions on behalf of the Federal Aviation Administration. Their labor is indispensable to production, delivery and certification across the 737 MAX, 777X, KC-46 and P-8 programs.

They confront a corporation with a documented record of overriding technical judgment and retaliating against workers who defend safety. Boeing managers have repeatedly pressured ODA personnel to approve aircraft despite safety concerns. Quality engineer Sam Salehpour testified that Boeing sidelined and threatened him after he warned of dangerous manufacturing practices on the 787 and 777. The 2024 Alaska Airlines door-plug blowout resulted from what the National Transportation Safety Board called Boeing's inadequate training, guidance and oversight, compounded by ineffective FAA supervision.

SPEEA members are confronting corporate criminals protected by the state. This is the same company whose concealment of the 737 MAX's deadly safety problems led to crashes that killed 346 people. No executive went to prison. In 2025, the Trump Justice Department granted Boeing a non-prosecution agreement, sparing it a felony conviction that could have threatened its status as a major military contractor.

The deal, which SPEEA members rejected, fell far short of the workers's own demands: market-leading pay; greater retirement security and retiree medical coverage for all; more affordable health care; additional leave without forfeiture; genuine flexible work; enforceable limits on layoffs and outsourcing; and guarantees that new technology would assist workers rather than eliminate their jobs.

Boeing and the SPEEA negotiation team advertised a 29.4 percent compounded wage-pool increase. This was not a guaranteed individual raise. The offer provided an immediate 3 percent increase, followed by salary and performance funds of 7 percent in 2027 and 5.5 percent in each of the following three years. The only annual individual guarantee was tied to the national CPI-W and capped at 3 percent. Everything above that minimum would be distributed according to performance and other metrics determined by management.

Local inflation already exceeds that ceiling. Consumer prices in the Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue area rose 4.5 percent in the year ending June 2026, including increases of 20.7 percent for energy and 24.7 percent for gasoline. Prices have risen roughly 22.8 percent since early 2022. Whenever inflation exceeds 3 percent, the guaranteed minimum imposes another real-wage cut.

The rest of the offer followed the same pattern. It provided only three additional paid days, with no payout for unused leave. Post-2007 hires would receive access to retiree medical coverage but pay 100 percent of the premium. It did not restore defined-benefit pensions to workers without them. The mandatory-overtime cap fell from 144 to 112 hours per quarter, but Boeing could exceed it for deliveries, customer emergencies and government priority orders. On-site work remained the baseline; managers could revoke temporary remote arrangements, while long-term remote work required vice-presidential approval.

The outsourcing language required discussion and limited disclosure but declared Boeing's decisions final and outside the grievance process. An AI group would discuss using the technology as a "force multiplier," without enforceable protection against displacement. A proposed joint safety committee could be delayed until June 2027 and would be "tailored to the operational needs" of Boeing, giving workers no independent authority over production or safety.

Boeing answered the rejection with retaliation. Management announced that it was implementing its "strike contingency plan" and withdrew the retroactive pay and higher 2026 incentive target it had conditioned on an early yes vote.

A strike would disrupt both commercial-aircraft certification and military production under conditions of expanding US wars and preparations for conflict with China. Boeing's position within the military-industrial complex guarantees that the Trump administration, like the Biden administration in 2024, will intervene on the company's side.

Workers must prepare now. The rank-and-file committee must demand full publication of bargaining communications; worker control over negotiations and voting; strike pay sufficient to sustain families; wage increases indexed to actual Puget Sound prices; genuine retirement and medical security; enforceable prohibitions on job destruction through outsourcing or AI; and rank-and-file authority over quality and safety.

It must appeal directly to IAM production workers to honor every picket line and halt production, while uniting with aerospace workers internationally and workers throughout the region. That is the basis for defeating the combined opposition of Boeing management, the union bureaucracies and the capitalist state.