

“The only way things are going to change is if we unite”: US truckers discuss proposed October 1 shutdown over soaring fuel costs

Norisa Diaz
29 September 2026

Truck drivers: tell us if you support the proposed October 1 action by filling out the form below. All submissions will be kept confidential.

Calls for truck drivers across the United States to park their rigs on October 1 are circulating among drivers as soaring diesel prices wipe out already-thin margins for owner-operators. The scale of any action Thursday remains unclear, but the fact that such action is being discussed, outside of the existing trade union apparatus and other structures, testifies to a growing mood of militancy in the working class.

The discussion comes amid a severe diesel crisis, fueled in part by disruptions from the US war against Iran. The national average price reached about \$6.44 a gallon on September 28. The same day, Texas Governor Greg Abbott declared a statewide disaster over the diesel shortage and record prices, temporarily expanding the use of untaxed dyed diesel and raising allowable weights for fuel, agricultural and timber shipments.

At the same time, the Trump administration has escalated its attack on immigrant truckers. Federal officials say more than 26,000 drivers have been put out of service under English-language requirements, while Mexico's National Chamber of Freight Transportation, CANACAR, estimates that roughly 25,000 Mexican commercial drivers have had B-1 visas revoked along the northern border. Earlier this month, some 300 Mexican drivers blockaded the Mexicali-Calexico and San Luis commercial crossings in protest against the visa crackdown.

This campaign has been accompanied by increasingly open anti-immigrant and anti-Sikh agitation. On September 13, 28-year-old Sikh truck driver Gurvinder Singh was stabbed 17 times at a Wyoming rest stop in an apparently racially motivated attack. Four days earlier, the Department of Homeland Security had posted an anti-immigrant graphic depicting a Sikh man with the words, “Get off our roads, you don’t know how to drive Mr Singh,” before deleting it

amid widespread denunciations.

The emergence of opposition among truckers, who occupy a key role in the national and world economy, is extremely important. To carry this forward, truckers should build rank-and-file committees across North America, democratically elected by the rank and file, independent of the union bureaucracies, to unite truckers of all nationalities in a common struggle against the cost of living, war and attacks on democratic rights.

The WSWs spoke with truck drivers near the US-Mexico border in San Diego about fuel prices, deteriorating working conditions, the attacks on immigrant drivers and the growing discussion of collective action.

One driver said “The price of diesel has destroyed our profit margin. I spend 1.5 times more these days than I used to. It used to be \$1,000 for gas a week, now it is \$1,500 for gas a week... It’s very difficult as a father—my family is buying only the necessities and nothing more.”

He said he was shutting down on October 1.

John told the *World Socialist Web Site* that he is soon retiring, even though he wishes he could keep driving. “It’s just not profitable for me to stay in the business. You know I’m not out here to lose.”

“Over the years, I’ve seen a roller coaster, but recent years are the worst I’ve ever seen. Fuel prices at the top of the list. Also changes in regulations and rates...In the late ’80s, early ’90s, we made money. Fuel prices were 77 cents a gallon in North Carolina.”

“But today its impossible sometimes to just break even. Let me give you an example: I came from the East Coast, in Boston all the way. I went up to San Francisco and come down to San Diego. The two jobs I dropped one in San Francisco, one in Colorado, coming across each one of those jobs paid \$2,000. When I got into Colorado, I had to hire two guys. And I get 50% of that, so I get \$1,000. I hired two guys at \$250 for each. Boom, that’s down to \$500. Okay, so fuel, you know, my labor, wear and tear. I lost money on

that job.

“I got into all the way to San Francisco. Everyone paid \$1,500. When I got there, the customer didn’t have the money to pay it. So I had to, in order to get off my truck, I had to rent a storage with my money for household goods, because by law I just can’t set the stuff on the side of the road. So I put it in storage in my name, and I won’t release it until I get paid. If I don’t get paid within the next 30 to 60 days, I not only lose what I would have paid, but I also lose what I’m paying in storage.

“She’s a paying customer beyond the contract, and I got there for the required delivery date (RDD). Times are hard for not just for us. People do fall on hard times. Now, hopefully, everything goes well. She sounds very sincere. If she can get it out within 30 days, pay me back my storage fee, and you know pay for the delivery, and we’d be okay. But if she can’t, I will stop payment on it, obviously, and I’ll have two options: go up there and get it out, or stop payment and let the storage auction it to get their money.”

John, who hauls goods and does a large share of military household moves, described how changes to the tariff system eliminated payments drivers once received for additional work.

“Back then anything over 75 feet from the truck to the house was considered a long carry, so we got extra money for it. Anytime we went up more than two flights of stairs, we got stair carry. That was extra. If that building had an elevator, we had an elevator charge. So they took all of that and said, ‘Oh, we’re gonna wind all that up in the tariffs.’ When they did, they decreased the tariffs.”

“If we pack the job, we come into your home and pack all the stuff in boxes. We used to get paid for each box, plus for packing that box and for hauling your shipment. Then they changed it, and said they are going to base it on the weight of the shipment, and we will give you a portion of your weight.’ So now we’re losing money on the packing material. And we have no say in how this is determined. Congress makes those adjustments,” he added.

John’s son is in the Army and he has already been told his battalion is set for deployment early next year. His son and daughter-in-law were previously deployed to Afghanistan together. His son-in-law is also still serving. His daughter-in-law recently left the military on PTSD disability.

Asked about the war in Iran, John said: “Oh, I’m totally against it. I think it’s unnecessary.” He added, “I’m very close to it because I move those guys around. I hear the stories, I see the results. I’m not for war.”

John had not heard about the recent blockade by Mexican truckers. But when told about it, he responded, “The only way things are going to change is if we unite.”

John recalled the example of the Cuban-American drivers

who work out of the Port of Miami, who struck a few years back. “They were so together. They couldn’t block the port because obviously you have more than just freight coming out of there—cruise ships run out of there—but they blocked where no other truck could go in there and get around them and walk out a container. And they stood there. They didn’t drive away at 5 o’clock. They stayed there. Their wives were coming, bringing food. People were showing up to deliver pallets of water. They stayed there.”

“All it takes is unity,” he added, “because we all face the same problem, all of us.”

On the B-1 visa revocations, John said, “It’s more like entrapment. People are doing what they’re supposed to do.” Outraged by ICE, he described a scene of ICE snatching a mother dropping her child off at school: “The kid’s going into class and doesn’t even know the mother is gone. So what is that child supposed to do?”

John himself was born in the Caribbean and has been a US citizen for more than 20 years, but now travels with his passport at all times. “I just don’t need to have ICE messing with me,” he said. “I’m in my sixties. I’ve never been in trouble. I follow the laws, rules. If I am doing what I’m supposed to do, then I just come here and focus on my truck.”

The WSWS also spoke to two B-1 Mexican drivers, Jose and Marcos. Jose said, “There have been cases of Mexican drivers who speak English or don’t speak English well—they’re taking away their visas. It’s an extreme to take away their visas just for not speaking English well.”

“Taking away your visa is taking away your income. What’s happening now is a political problem—they’re attacking the immigrants.”

On the question of cross-border unity Marcos added, “If we unite, the system collapses, because there won’t be food, there won’t be fuel. And there are many corporations that won’t (have the goods or materials to) be able to function.”



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact