

Boeing engineers, technical workers approve contract after rejecting first offer

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SPEEA members: Tell us what you thought about the contract and why by filling out the form below. All submissions will be kept anonymous.

Members of the Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace (SPEEA) voted Thursday to approve a four-year contract with Boeing. In the Professional Unit, which represents about 13,000 engineers and scientists, 7,895 workers voted yes and 3,780 voted no, an approval of nearly 68 percent. In the Technical Unit, which represents about 4,000 analysts, technicians, planners and specialists, 2,061 voted yes and 1,793 voted no, an approval of just over 53 percent.

The vote came after an initial contract rejection in August. The same workers rejected Boeing's initial offer by 64 percent in the Professional Unit and 72 percent in the Technical Unit, and authorized a strike by 88 and 90 percent. It was the first time in nearly 14 years that both units had held full contract negotiations. The SPEEA negotiating team had unanimously endorsed the first offer.

The contract fight is part of a broader movement among airline and aerospace workers. In 2024, 33,000 Boeing machinists rejected a contract endorsed by the International Association of Machinists (IAM) by 94.6 percent, voted by 96 percent to strike and stayed out for 53 days. In 2025, 3,200 Boeing defense workers in the St. Louis area rejected four offers and struck for 101 days before accepting a fifth. In July 2025, 71 percent of the United Airlines flight attendants who voted rejected their tentative agreement. On September 18, more than 11,000 United maintenance technicians rejected a Teamsters-backed contract by 53.5 percent to 46.5 percent. Six days later, 350 Teamsters at Safran Seats in Gainesville, Texas, struck after rejecting mandatory overtime.

The Boeing engineers' struggle raises the question of aircraft safety at a company where production pressure, serious design flaws, management failures and the concealment of critical safety information contributed to the 737 MAX 8 crashes in 2018 and 2019, killing 346 people. After the first contract rejection, SPEEA acknowledged that members' mistrust of Boeing management was rooted in jobs moving out of state or offshore, "quality and safety taking a backseat to schedule," and engineering and technical decisions being "overruled or ignored."

The first rejection revealed the conflict between SPEEA members and the union officialdom. Rather than mobilize the membership to carry out the strike authorization once the contracts expired October 6, SPEEA made clear that its aim was to avoid a strike, claiming, "Showing Boeing that we're willing to strike is often the best way to avoid one."

The narrow 53 percent vote among technical workers shows that opposition remained substantial. While there were limited improvements to wages in the second deal, no doubt the SPEEA bureaucracy's refusal to seriously prepare for a strike also was a factor in its ratification against substantial opposition.

The approved contract provides an average pay increase of 32 percent over four years, up from 26.5 percent in the first offer. This includes a 10 percent raise after ratification and a 4 percent raise in March 2027. Wage "pools" rise by 6 percent in each of the following three years, with 4 percent guaranteed to all workers and the remaining 2 percent distributed selectively by management. A wage pool sets the total amount available for raises across a group of employees rather than guaranteeing each worker the full stated percentage, leaving the selective portion to management allocation. The second offer did not fundamentally alter most other provisions of the rejected agreement.

There was no change from the first offer on retirement or medical benefits. Workers hired since 2007 who leave Boeing on or after December 31, 2027 and meet the plan's age and service requirements gain access to retiree medical coverage, but they must pay the full cost. The mandatory overtime cap falls to 96 hours a quarter for professional workers and 112 for technical workers, from 144.

On job security, the contract leaves Boeing with broad authority over the use of non-Boeing labor and movement of work. Article 9 on non-Boeing labor was unchanged from the existing contract. That is significant given Boeing's recent record.

Cost-cutting announced during the 2024 Boeing machinists' strike cut 2,600 jobs in Washington state alone, including about 600 SPEEA-represented positions. The union reported cases in which laid-off employees were told they could continue performing Boeing work for lower pay through a third-party

contractor. Earlier this year Boeing announced plans to move about 300 union-represented 787 engineering jobs from Washington to nonunion South Carolina.

Artificial intelligence was another bargaining issue. SPEEA originally said it would pursue guardrails to ensure that AI would be used as an aid, rather than a replacement for workers. The agreement instead provides for a joint labor-management committee to study its use, without an enforceable prohibition on displacement, effectively making SPEEA officials jointly responsible for AI-related concessions on workers. Boeing is already expanding digital engineering, AI, digital twins, automated inspection and collaborative robots as part of a strategy to increase production rates, shorten development cycles and reduce rework.

The pressure to increase output is substantial. Boeing ended the second quarter with a record \$715 billion backlog, but also \$45.9 billion in debt and \$88.4 billion in inventories. It lost \$435 million in the first half of the year and remains under pressure to raise 737 and 787 production, deliver aircraft faster and restore cash flow. In September, CEO Kelly Ortberg said stabilizing 737 MAX production at 47 aircraft a month was taking longer than expected, reducing expected 2026 free cash flow.

For Boeing engineers and technical workers, these pressures cannot be separated from safety. Engineers and technical workers design Boeing aircraft. They do the structural analysis, write the software and approve the engineering documentation. During the development of the MAX, Boeing employees recorded their alarm at the conditions inside the program. One wrote, “This is a joke. This airplane is ridiculous.” Another said, “I’ll be shocked if the FAA passes this turd.” Management’s ability to ignore these concerns and keep the MAX on schedule was partly enabled by a certification system that allowed Boeing to exercise extensive delegated authority from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

The conflict between workers and management over safety runs throughout the airline industry. The FAA has about 11,000 certified air traffic controllers, against a staffing target of 12,563, and acknowledges that excessive overtime contributes to fatigue and burnout. At Montréal-Trudeau International Airport, 39-year-old ramp worker Oscar Robayo was crushed to death during a routine pushback on August 24. Co-workers told the WWS that they had complained for months about unsafe conditions and that his employer, subcontractor Samsic Assistance Canada, failed to provide the equipment needed to keep him a safe distance from the aircraft.

These conditions are driving repeated rebellions against sellout contracts endorsed by the union apparatus. United flight attendants rejected a tentative agreement despite its advertised economic gains; United maintenance technicians rejected an “industry-leading” Teamsters-backed deal; Boeing machinists rejected two IAM-backed agreements during their 2024 struggle. At Boeing, the Workers Rank-and-File Committee,

formed before the machinists’ strike, fought the IAM’s isolation of the walkout and called for workers to take control of the struggle themselves.

A strike would also have affected Boeing defense work, including engineering on programs, such as the KC-46, bringing workers into conflict not only with corporate management but with the US government and the requirements of American imperialism. Boeing is also a major US military contractor and key part of the military-industrial complex. Its civilian aircraft business is likewise a strategic asset: The US government actively promotes Boeing sales abroad, which generate tens of billions of dollars in exports and sustain a vast domestic aerospace supply chain.

Two days before the SPEEA vote, the Navy announced that Boeing had won the F/A-XX fighter program to replace the F/A-18, a development contract valued at \$20 billion. In March 2025, President Trump announced that Boeing would build the Air Force’s F-47 fighter. In May 2025, the Justice Department reached a non-prosecution agreement resolving the fraud case arising from Boeing’s deception of the FAA over the 737 MAX, and a federal judge dismissed the charge in November.

The experience of the SPEEA contract fight shows the need for engineers and technical workers to build independent rank-and-file organizations capable of acting on the mandates set by the workers themselves. A strike authorization cannot be left in the hands of officials whose aim is to use it as leverage for another agreement and avoid a strike.

The Boeing Workers Rank-and-File Committee, formed on September 11, 2024, two days before the machinists’ strike began, must now be expanded among engineers and technicians. Workers should build committees in every workplace, demanding publication of all bargaining communications, workers’ control over negotiations and votes, wage increases indexed to actual prices, enforceable prohibitions on job destruction through outsourcing or AI, and rank-and-file authority over quality and safety.

These committees should unite with machinists, with airline workers and with aerospace workers internationally through the IWA-RFC and establish the complete political independence of the working class from the union bureaucracies, both capitalist parties and the state.



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