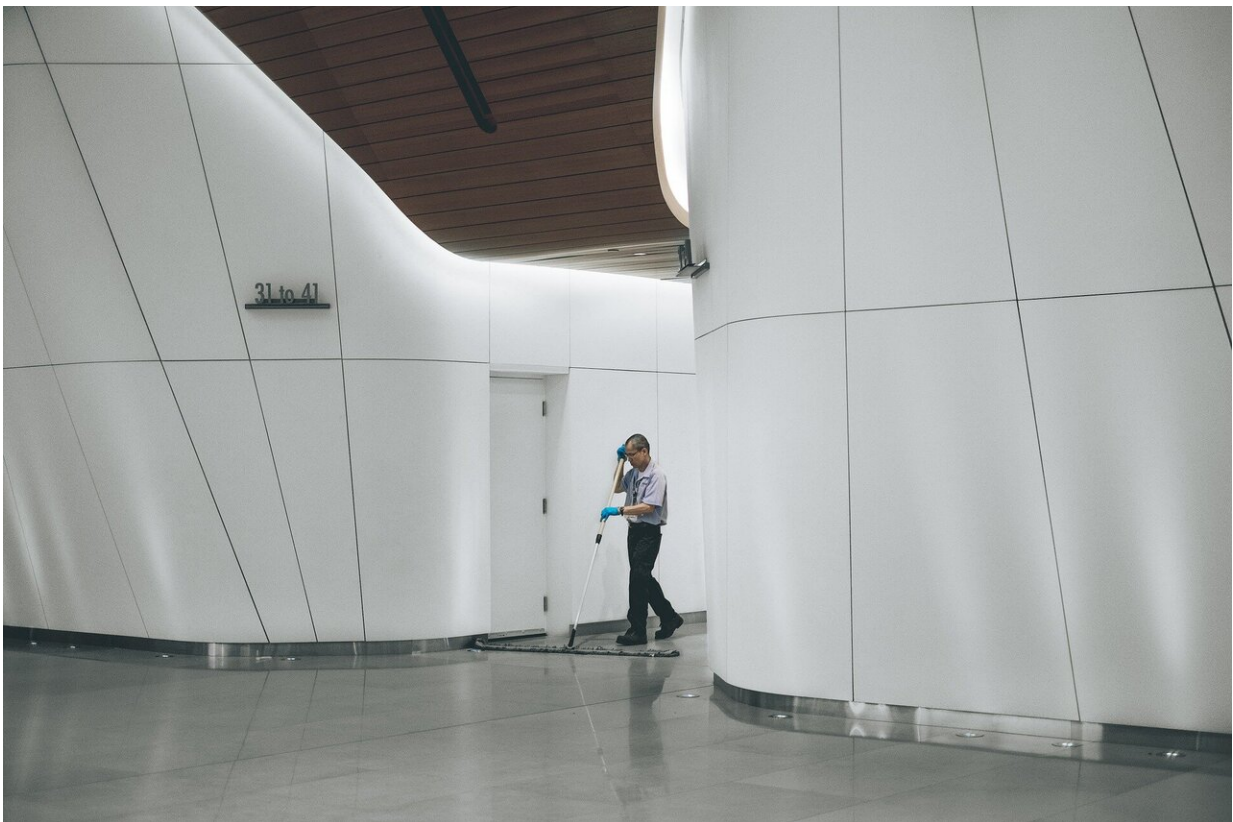


Hundreds of janitors strike at Facebook campuses across Bay Area amid impending layoffs

October 10 2022, by Aldo Toledo



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Hundreds of janitors have been on strike since Tuesday at various Bay Area Meta (Facebook) campuses in anticipation of massive layoffs,

demanding that the tech giant hold its janitorial contractor accountable to crafting a new agreement that won't put more work on the backs of those who remain.

Custodial workers at various Silicon Valley and San Francisco Meta offices have joined together this week to demand a new agreement with their employer SBM Janitorial Services—Meta's housekeeping contractor for its sprawling campuses across the region—to reduce the number of layoffs and ensure that their impact won't place "an unmanageable burden on janitors."

Since McClellan, California-based SBM Janitorial Services took over the contract for custodial services at various Meta campuses in the Bay Area early this year, SBM announced it would be letting go a third of all janitorial workers. The news sent shockwaves through the workforce made up largely of Black and Latino workers.

Now Silicon Valley Rising and the South Labor Council are calling on Meta to come to the table to help them get better working conditions. Silicon Valley Rising is a coalition of Meta service workers, unions and labor organizations that represent contracted services workers.

"The people working as janitors have upheld their commitment to keeping Facebook workers safe before and during the pandemic, yet now are being treated as the collateral damage of cutbacks while Facebook goes back on its previous commitment to stand with service workers," said Maria Noel, campaign director of Silicon Valley Rising. "Facebook cannot stand by while the people who can least afford it are the first to lose their livelihoods."

While janitors on strike say Meta has been a leader in supporting its service workers since the start of the pandemic—noting that the tech giant did not stop paying workers when offices were shut down—their

commitment to "their most diverse and vulnerable group of working people has been waning."

"As California began to open up, janitors worked hard to make sure that [office buildings](#) were safe and disinfected so Facebook employees could safely return to their offices despite the ongoing public health crisis," a statement from Silicon Valley Rising reads. "However, since SBM Janitorial took over the contract earlier this year, janitors were notified that one-third of them would be laid off."

Ultimately the negotiation will be between custodial workers and SBM, not Meta. In a statement to this [news organization](#), Meta spokesperson Tessa Giammona noted that SBM has "secured jobs elsewhere for impacted employees with no disruption to pay or benefits," and emphasized that "since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic... we've paid our vendor partners to ensure every one of their workers assigned to a Meta office was paid even if they couldn't do their jobs from home."

"We're proud that we've partnered with vendors to create and maintain thousands of good-paying, union jobs with industry-leading compensation packages and will continue to do so," the statement said. "Meta does not make hiring and firing decisions for our vendors as they are independent companies that provide a service for a variety of clients. Nevertheless, we always work closely with vendor partners to ensure open communications and a smooth process whenever there are any changes to service needs."

SBM Janitorial Services did not return a request for comment.

Big tech companies like Facebook, Silicon Valley Rising says, have created a dual-class worker system in Silicon Valley at the expense of "staff performing essential services that keep offices running smoothly."

But since the pandemic has kept most office space in the country shuttered for the past nearly three years now, these essential workers have no jobs for them to report to. Janitors aren't the only ones losing their livelihood: over 100 shuttle bus drivers contracted by We Drive You have also been laid off.

"Facebook is not only neglecting their working people, but also showing a lack of responsibility when it comes to hiring contractors and subcontractors—this is not what leadership looks like," Silicon Valley Rising said. "Facebook cannot sit idly by while their contractor acts irresponsibly, and in opposition to its commitment to stand by its service workers and the larger Silicon Valley community."

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