

Boeing workers to vote on authorization of potential strike

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Boeing workers in the Pacific Northwest are set to vote to authorize a potential strike if contract talks stumble ahead of a September deadline.

Tens of thousands of Boeing hourly workers have been called Wednesday for a vote in Seattle expected to authorize a potential labor

strike if ongoing contract negotiations stumble.

"What can you do to get a good contract?" International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM) Local 751 asks on its website. "Attend strike sanction [vote](#) on July 17th!"

The local represents nearly 32,000 people in the Seattle, Washington, region, with about 30,000 at Boeing plants in nearby Renton, where the US aerospace giant's 737 is assembled, and in Everett, where the 777 is put together. A strike would freeze activity at both factories.

The two sides in March began talks on a new contract to replace an agreement that has been in place for 16 years. The contract expires at midnight on September 12.

Wednesday's vote comes before [union members](#) see a proposed contract. A second vote would be required on September 12 to strike if members reject the contract.

Boeing described Wednesday's vote as a "procedural" step that does not definitely mean a strike will occur.

"We remain confident we can reach a deal that balances the needs of our employees and the business realities we face as a company," Boeing said in a statement.

Local 751 president Jon Holden has demanded a "substantial" salary hike of at least 40 percent, as well as provisions for health care, retirement and job security.

Holden has called a hefty wage hike imperative after workers only received nominal cost-of-living support over the last eight years despite "massive inflation."

At a Senate hearing last month, Boeing chief executive Dave Calhoun said workers "will definitely get a raise."

The union is also seeking assurances from Boeing that it will build its next new aircraft—expected around 2035—in the Seattle region.

Holden has said certainty on the next jet being manufactured in the Pacific Northwest amounts to "job security for the next 50 years."

Show of solidarity

The IAM said talks have been largely moribund in recent weeks. The union hopes for a commanding turnout on Wednesday to send a strong message to Boeing.

The event will be held at T-Mobile Park in Seattle, the stadium for the Seattle Mariners baseball team, which holds up to 48,000 people. The IAM also plans Wednesday a parade of some 800 motorcycles.

"The purpose is to show Boeing your solidarity," the IAM says on the local's website.

"The factory will be quiet," the local said, adding it was sending a "message to take our proposals seriously and a reminder of what it would be like if our members choose to reject a substandard offer and vote to strike in September."

Boeing said it would allow employees to leave work early or arrive late to provide "reasonable" travel time on Wednesday.

"We respect and support the right of our employees to take part in the July 17 vote," Boeing said. "Partial time away from work will be excused and not counted for attendance purposes."

The IAM says the early strike authorization vote will also provide legal notice to union officials to be prepared to administer strike pay to workers if a stoppage is called.

Striking workers are entitled to \$250 in weekly pay starting the third week of a [strike](#).

The IAM has also sought at least one seat on Boeing's board of directors, but that demand is considered more of a longshot.

Besides the Washington workers, the IAM's W24 district, which represents 1,200 Boeing workers in Oregon, will also vote Wednesday.

In light of Boeing's current travails, the union wants to be able to bargain on any changes to quality management that could affect the production system.

"We never proposed those things in the past but it's our reputation, it's our jobs, it's our livelihoods," Holden said.

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