

# 18,000 Teamsters prepare to strike at Costco across 5 states

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*Costco workers: Tell us what demands you are preparing to strike for by filling out the form below! All submissions will be kept anonymous.*

Following a strike vote last week, 18,000 Teamsters union members across five states at warehouse store chain Costco are prepared to strike on February 1. If it goes forward, the strike at locations in California, New York, Washington, Maryland and Michigan, will be one of the first major labor struggles under the second Trump administration.

Workers are demanding better pay, benefits and working conditions. One veteran worker described the situation on Reddit: “Every single year the quality of work goes down. More work is thrust upon you, with no additional time to do it, and scolded if you can’t do it all. They are always trying to trim hours to save money.”

Another worker added, “I wish our pay would meet the inflation because right now I am struggling hard and I am topped out [with] 18 years.”

While Costco workers have been struggling to get by, profits for the large corporation went up 1 percent in the last fiscal year, reaching \$7.4 billion from a revenue of \$254 billion. Costco shares have surged more than 35 percent in the last year, with shares now over \$900 a piece.

Costco workers must unite with the broader working class, which is entering into struggle across the US and the world. This includes strikes at Amazon and Starbucks late last year, an ongoing strike by 5,000 healthcare staff in Portland, Oregon, and a near-unanimous strike vote by roughly 500 Detroit Axle workers with their contract expiring this Friday.

Major struggles of grocery retail workers are coming in the next weeks and months. Around 17,000 workers at Safeway and King Soopers in Colorado are pushing for strike action, and contracts covering 47,000 Southern California grocery workers are set to expire in March. Also in March, the contract for 20,500 Kroger workers in Georgia expires.

Costco workers are determined, but a warning must be made that the Teamsters bureaucracy very well may announce a tentative agreement before they even hit the picket lines. If a strike does take place, the bureaucracy will

do everything in its power to isolate the workers from the broader class struggle.

This underscores the need for workers to take matters into their own hands through rank-and-file committees, overthrowing the authority of the union apparatus and replacing it with organs of workers’ power. Such an internal rebellion is a necessary first step to prepare for a broader fight against inequality and exploitation.

## Teamster bureaucrats support Trump against workers

The planned strike at Costco was announced as Trump took office in Washington D.C., after which he signed a flurry of executive orders beginning massive attacks on immigrants. This includes countless workers at Costco and other retail chains. According to the Migration Policy Institute, nearly 20 percent of all retail workers in the US are foreign-born, and about 19 percent of all immigrants in the US work in retail, which is roughly 3.6 million workers.

Immigrant workers work alongside their “native-born” brothers and sisters in every industry, but the Teamsters bureaucrats are closing ranks with the new fascist administration and promoting toxic nationalist politics. Teamsters President Sean O’Brien gave a nationalist speech at the Republican National Committee endorsing Trump’s “America First” rhetoric. Since then, the Teamsters have doubled down, with one recent post on its official X/Twitter account declaring that “American workers” must “come first.”

This is not isolated to the Teamsters but is a broader trend. Earlier this month, East Coast dock and port workers represented by the International Longshoremen’s Association (ILA) and the US Maritime Association (USMX) were denied the chance to strike as a sellout TA was announced just a week before their extended contract was set to expire, all the while the ILA bureaucracy praised

Trump as “one of the best friends of working men and women in the United States.”

In reality, the attacks on immigrants are only the first step in a vast assault on the democratic and social rights of all workers on behalf of the American oligarchs whom Trump represents. A tremendous social conflict is being prepared, in which workers will be pitted not just against Trump but against the corporate elite and the sellout union bureaucrats.

The bureaucracy’s support for Trump is connected with its role in enforcing years of sellouts, including the contract for UPS workers in 2023, which is being used to cut tens of thousands of jobs as part of a nationwide automation drive.

Last December, the Teamsters also sold out rank-and-file refinery workers in Detroit after a three-month-long walkout. The union organized a snap vote for a tentative agreement, which did not meet the workers’ demands, and did not give workers time to read the contract they were voting on.

### **“I don’t want to be under the thumb of a fascist dictator”**

In sharp contrast to the right-wing orientation of the union bureaucrats, there is widespread opposition in the working class.

*World Socialist Web Site* reporters spoke to Costco workers on a practice picket line in San Diego last week. One worker, when asked about Trump’s incoming administration and planned attacks on immigrants, replied: “You know these mass deportations are just racist. It should be all the people, we the people. The last thing I want is to be under the thumb of a fascist dictator. The immigrants are doing important jobs, we should all unite together. We’re all the ones doing the work.”

When asked about the Teamsters general president supporting Trump, the worker interjected: “Get rid of his a..!”

He also spoke about the situation at Costco: The company “is not negotiating. They are threatening our healthcare and our benefits, they’re putting the squeeze on us to make themselves rich. I know workers here who need those medical benefits to survive. The stocks are up something like three-fold, but they’re only offering us a 60 cents per hour raise. Squeezing payroll and cutting hours, that makes the customer experience worse. It exposes the lie in their slogans of taking care of their workers.”

Reporters also spoke to two Costco workers, who had traveled all the way from Los Angeles in the midst of

ongoing wildfires, to join their brothers and sisters on the picket lines in San Diego. Referring to the wildfires, one said: “I heard that the insurance companies canceled people’s policies before the fire and now won’t pay out. That’s criminal, they all paid for that, and now they’re getting nothing? That’s stolen money. There’s billions of dollars of damage, they’re making us pay for that.”

The other worker said: “The emergency response was so disorganized. Where we are, the Eaton Fire is the closest of the fires. They sent out two false alerts for evacuation. The alerts created a panic because there were no instructions about where to go or what route or where to find shelter.”

He concluded: “What’s crazy to me is that the disaster response is basically being done by the community itself. Everything is done by the people in the community, the official places are doing almost nothing.”

Costco workers must use the time between now and February 1 to organize rank-and-file committees to assert democratic control over their fight. As the *World Socialist Web Site* declared in its New Year’s statement:

Only to the extent that power is wrested from the hands of the bureaucracy and transferred to workers on the shop floor can the unions be revived as instruments of the class struggle...

The IWA-RFC must be developed as the framework for workers to share information, plan collective actions and mount a united offensive against exploitation, austerity and war. It must oppose all forms of national chauvinism and anti-immigrant agitation employed by the ruling class to divide workers against each other. It must organize working class opposition to the mass deportation operations of the Trump administration and far-right governments throughout the world.

Rank-and-file committees, formed independently by workers in factories, schools and workplaces, are the means through which workers can organize democratically, assert their own demands and link their struggles with those of workers around the world.



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