



US East Coast port strike set to start Tuesday, says union

ReutersBy David Shepardson and Steve Holland | Sep 29 2024 at 10:30 PM | [Ports & Terminals](#)

A port strike on the U.S. East Coast and Gulf of Mexico will go ahead starting on Tuesday, the International Longshoremen's Association union said on Sunday, signaling action that could cause delays and snarl supply chains.

"United States Maritime Alliance ... refuses to address a half-century of wage subjugation," the union said in a statement. The United States Maritime Alliance, known as USMX, represents employers of the East and Gulf Coast longshore industry.

USMX did not immediately comment.

If union members walk off the job at ports stretching from Maine to Texas, it would be the first coast-wide ILA strike since 1977, affecting ports that handle about half the nation's ocean shipping.

A source said no negotiations were taking place Sunday and none are currently planned before the midnight Monday deadline. The union said previously the strike would not impact military cargo shipments or cruise ship traffic.

White House spokesperson Robyn Patterson said late Sunday that over the weekend, senior officials have been in touch with USMX representatives "urging them to come to a fair agreement fairly and quickly - one that reflects the success of the companies." The officials also delivered the same message to ILA, she added.

Earlier on Sunday, President Joe Biden said he did not intend to intervene to prevent a walkout if dock workers failed to secure a new contract by an Oct. 1 deadline.

"It's collective bargaining. I don't believe in Taft-Hartley," he told reporters. Presidents can intervene in labor disputes that threaten national security or safety by imposing an 80-day cooling-off period under the federal Taft-Hartley Act.

Reuters first reported on Sept. 17 that Biden did not plan to invoke the Taft-Hartley provision, citing a White House official.

A strike could stop the flow of everything from food to automobiles at major ports – in a dispute that could jeopardize jobs and stoke inflation weeks ahead of the U.S. presidential election.

Business Roundtable, which represents major U.S. business leaders, said it was "deeply concerned about the potential strike at the East Coast and Gulf Coast ports."

The group warned a labor stoppage could cost the U.S. economy billions of dollars daily "hurting American businesses, workers and consumers across the country. We urge both sides to come to an agreement before Monday night's deadline."

For months, the union has threatened to shut down the 36 ports it covers if employers like container ship operator Maersk and its APM Terminals North America do not deliver significant wage increases and stop terminal automation projects.

The dispute is worrying businesses that rely on ocean shipping to export their wares, or secure crucial imports.

The USMX employer group has accused the ILA of refusing to negotiate.



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