

## **ILA members overwhelmingly approve new contract covering East, Gulf coast ports**

Union dockworkers get 62% raise, employers win limited automation rights

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Striking ILA members protesting at Port Houston, October 2024. (Photo: Jim Allen/FreightWaves)

There's labor peace at Eastern Seaboard and Gulf Coast ports — for another six years.

Members of the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) on Tuesday overwhelmingly voted to ratify the new master contract with port employers represented by the United States Maritime Alliance.

The union in a release said nearly 99% of rank-and-file members voted to approve the pact covering 24,000 workers in container handling at 14 ports from Boston to Texas.

The extension to the master contract is retroactive to Oct. 1, 2024, and runs through Sept. 30, 2030.

The approval vote gives ILA members a 62% pay raise over the six years of the contract, accelerated raises and improved benefits. The pact allows terminal operators and ocean carriers to introduce limited automation equipment in container handling linked to guarantees that protect union jobs.

ILA President Harold Daggett, who the union said had been the target of death threats during the strike, earlier called the contract historic, and worth as much as \$35 billion in total.

The ILA and USMX will formally sign the contract on March 11.

Members of USMX unanimously approved the contract in January.

The vote ends a bitter fight over automation on the docks that featured a strike that shut down container and vehicle handling for three days this past October. Throughout negotiations that began

in 2023, the union had cast employers as greedy foreign-based entities, looking to eliminate union jobs while siphoning billions of dollars in profits out of the U.S.

The work stoppage cost the U.S. economy as much as \$2 billion — nearly \$1 billion just at the Port of New York and New Jersey alone.

President Joe Biden at the time refused to intervene but sent a team of negotiators who were instrumental in ending the walkout and securing an extension of the current contract through Jan. 15 while bargaining resumed.

President-elect Donald Trump in December also backed the union after meeting with Harold Daggett and his son, Dennis Daggett, an ILA executive vice president who is expected to succeed his septuagenarian father as union chief.

Harold Daggett, who also served as chief negotiator, in the release called the agreement “the greatest contract in ILA history, and maybe the strongest collective bargaining agreement ever negotiated by any union.”

Daggett praised Trump for his support, as well as Paul DeMaria, who represented USMX in negotiations. Daggett said DeMaria was “instrumental” in helping to avoid a second strike.

The ILA contract is also expected to reset the bar for future negotiations between the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) and employers represented by the Pacific Maritime Association. The current contract covering dockworkers at 29 West Coast ports was ratified in August 2023 and expires July 1, 2028.