



AFL-CIO

AMERICA'S UNIONS

**American Federation
of Labor and
Congress of Industrial
Organizations**

815 Black Lives Matter
Plaza NW
Washington, DC 20006

202-637-5000

aflcio.org

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

ELIZABETH H. SHULER
PRESIDENT

FREDRICK D. REDMOND
SECRETARY-TREASURER

Cecil Roberts
Matthew Loeb
Randi Weingarten
Baldemar Velásquez
Lee A. Saunders
James Callahan
Sean McGarvey
Stuart Appelbaum
Mark Dimondstein
Sara Nelson
Marc Perrone
Eric Dean
Richard Lanigan
Gabrielle Carteris
Mark McManus
Elissa McBride
John Samuelson
Vonda McDaniel
Gwen Mills
Charles Wovkanech
Bonnie Castillo
Ernest A. Logan
James Slevin
John Costa
Tim Driscoll
Everett Kelley
Anthony Shelton
Edward A. Kelly
Evelyn DeJesus
Cheryl Eliano
Matthew S. Biggs
Roxanne Brown
Arthur Maratea
James A. Williams Jr.
Ben Valdepeña
Meghann Burke
Bernie Burnham
Gina Cooper
Frank Christensen
Roland Rexha
Rich Santa
Jason Ambrosi
Kenneth Cooper
Brian Renfroe
Shawn Fain
Brent Booker
Michael Coleman
Claude Cummings Jr.
David Heindel
Margaret Mock
David McCall
Brian Bryant
Lloyd Howell

September 26, 2024

Dear Representative:

I am writing on behalf of the AFL-CIO and its nearly 13 million members in reference to your September 19, 2024, letter to President Biden concerning the contract negotiations between the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) and the United States Maritime Alliance (USMX). That letter warned of the dangers of a longshoremen's strike and urged the Biden administration "to utilize every authority at its disposal to ensure the continuing flow of goods," presumably referring to a judicial injunction under the Taft-Hartley Act to stop a strike. Unfortunately, suggesting to the USMX that an injunction is possible makes resolution of the contract before the October 1 strike deadline less likely.

History tells us that when companies can count on an injunction against a strike, they do not negotiate in good faith to reach an agreement. By even suggesting a possible injunction, your letter makes a deal less likely and a strike all the more likely. The Biden administration has been clear that the parties need to settle the matter, telling Reuters on September 17: "We've never invoked Taft-Hartley to break a strike and are not considering doing so now." Yet your letter tries to suggest otherwise, giving the companies reason to dig in their heels. Instead of calling for government intervention, a far more productive tact would be to press the companies to meet the workers' very reasonable demands.

ILA members are seeking to make up for years of small or even zero wage increases from the carriers. Like all other workers, longshoremen need raises just to keep up with the cost of living. And, like workers in many other industries—from hospitality to health care to film and television—they need fair contract provisions that protect their jobs from being eliminated by automation.

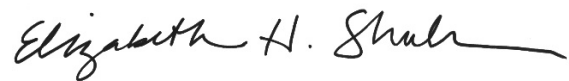
Throughout the pandemic, longshore workers never took a day off, risking their health and lives to make sure shelves were stocked and the supply chain remained strong. The public strongly supports these front-line workers and their just demand for economic security. It adds insult to injury to encourage USMX to provoke a strike rather than agree to a fair contract for the workers who kept food on the table and our economy running through the darkest days of the COVID-19 crisis.

Letter to House Representatives
Page two
September 26, 2024

While your letter warned that a potential strike could “result in delays and dire impacts to our supply chains, our economy, and the American consumer,” it sent exactly the wrong message to the companies if the goal is to avoid such an outcome.

Averting a strike is the responsibility of the employers who refuse to offer ILA members a contract that reflects the dignity and value of their labor. The fight for a fair contract for longshoremen is the entire labor movement’s fight. We stand united with the 45,000 ILA members who work hard every day to keep our nation’s economy moving. Please call on USMX to make a fair offer to settle this contract before October 1.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elizabeth H. Shuler". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Elizabeth H. Shuler
President

EHS/MG/mb