

US dockworkers restart contract talks as strike threat looms

Article



The news: Talks between dockworkers and East and Gulf Coast port operators are set to resume next week, after both sides agreed to return to the negotiating table following a nearly two-month impasse.

But time is running short: Negotiators have until January 15 to avert a potential strike, which would have [costly repercussions for global supply chains](#) and the US economy.

The issue: The International Longshoremen’s Association (ILA) has already extracted significant pay hikes from its employers after a three-day strike in October. But the sticking point now is the [use of automation](#)—which the ILA naturally opposes, given its potential to replace workers, and which its employers see as necessary for improving efficiency and modernizing operations.

- Tipping the scales in the ILA’s favor is the support of President-elect **Donald Trump**. “The amount of money saved [from automation] is nowhere near the distress, hurt, and harm it causes for American Workers, in this case, our Longshoremen,” he said in a Truth Social post.
- At the same time, the ports’ unwillingness to make concessions—even given the threat of a damaging strike—suggests that it will be difficult to find a solution that appeases both sides.

Looking ahead: The ILA’s contract negotiations could have a profound impact on global supply chains as well as the [US labor movement](#), which is losing steam amid a loosening labor market and growing pushback from employers.

While it’s unclear whether Trump’s support for the ILA will translate into a more labor-friendly administration—especially given the presence of union skeptics **Elon Musk** and **Vivek Ramaswamy**—a win for the ILA could embolden union organizers to renew their efforts to extract concessions from companies like **Starbucks**.

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