



USMX says ILA won't negotiate but union says employers resist wage, benefit & working condition improvements

by [Stas Margaronis](#) 17 hours ago

The U.S. Maritime Alliance (USMX), representing employers at U.S. East and Gulf ports, says the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) refuses to meet to discuss a new agreement with the current contract set to expire on September 30th, 2024.

However, the ILA says USMX has refused to address a number of outstanding issues including wages, benefits, automation, pensions and cameras in work areas, issues that are blocking a new contract.

The September 23rd statement by USMX argues that "Despite additional attempts by USMX to engage with the ILA and resume bargaining, we have been unable to schedule a meeting to continue negotiations on a new Master Contract. We remain prepared to bargain at any time, but both sides must come to the table if we are going to reach a deal, and there is no indication that the ILA is interested in negotiating at this time."



The Zim Hong Kong enters the Port of Wilmington, NC

However, ILA President Harold Daggett has countered, in a letter to union members, that USMX is not negotiating in good faith and has resisted improvements in wages, benefits and citing a number of outstanding grievances:

Wages: Daggett charges that USMX has exploited a low wage regime for years: "USMX claims to offer industry-leading wages. However, their interpretation of 'leading wages' is polar opposite to ours.

Inflation has completely eaten into any raises and wages. Everything has become more expensive, even compared to six years ago. Our members are struggling to pay their mortgages, rent, car payments, groceries, utility bills, taxes, and in some cases, their children's education. USMX's corporate greed has made them delusional-profits over people. They have taken advantage of a low entry wage and a tiered progression system for thirty years. We outright reject their position on the new entry wage."

Automation: Daggett and the ILA are opposed to automation: "USMX is trying to fool you with promises of workforce protections for semi-automation. Let me be clear: we don't want any form of semi-automation or full automation. We want our jobs—the jobs we have historically done for over 132 years. USMX members expects us to trust them? They don't even live up to the current contract, and they want us to believe that they will honor workforce protections?"

Container Royalty: "Container royalty was originally negotiated as a supplemental wage. That's our members' money, earned through their hard work! Our members should never have to share their container royalty money with the ocean carriers, who are currently making record profits. The very idea that these corporate giants would even consider taking money out of our members' pockets is sickening. This is yet another example of corporate greed and their disdain for the workers who make their success possible."

Retirement and Pension Contributions: Daggett says current provisions are inadequate: "We negotiated a National Money Purchase Defined Contribution Plan in the current contract, and yes, the employers will be adding to that. But it's a constant battle to increase the defined benefit (pension) because our man-hour assessment is simply not enough money for us to manage our funds at the local level."

Healthcare Coverage and Hardship Provisions: "USMX suggests that our healthcare benefits will remain the same. That's not good enough. We demand better coverage for our members. We want to enhance our benefits, not just maintain them. Our members deserve it, and we will fight for it. We also want to establish a hardship provision for those rare but heartbreaking cases where members are at risk of losing their healthcare benefits."

Cameras in Workstations: Daggett says that: "USMX continues to monitor us by placing cameras in our workstations and in the cabs of the equipment we operate. They say it's for safety, but we know better. They are using these cameras to monitor and control us, making our members feel like they're being watched every second of the day. No worker, especially a woman, should feel uncomfortable or unsafe because management is stalking them while they're trying to do their job. These employers are creating a hostile work environment under the guise of safety, and we won't stand for it."

Daggett concluded by warning: "These are the same people who circumvent your contract every day and drag their feet in the grievance and arbitration process. These are the same people who act like Big Brother, watching your every move and creating hostile work environments by putting cameras in our workstations and equipment."

The USMX statement says that it has been in contact with federal agencies: "USMX has received outreach from the Department of Labor, the Federal Mediation & Conciliation Service (FMCS), and other federal agencies and we will keep them up-to-date on the status of negotiations. We would be open to working with the FMCS, as we have done successfully in the past, but that is only possible if both sides agree to mediation. Our goal remains the same - we want to bargain and avoid a strike, but time is running out if the ILA is unwilling to return to the table."

The current 6-year agreement covers approximately 25,000 port workers employed in container and roll-on/roll-off operations at ports on the U.S. East and Gulf Coasts and runs from October 1, 2018, through September 30, 2024.



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