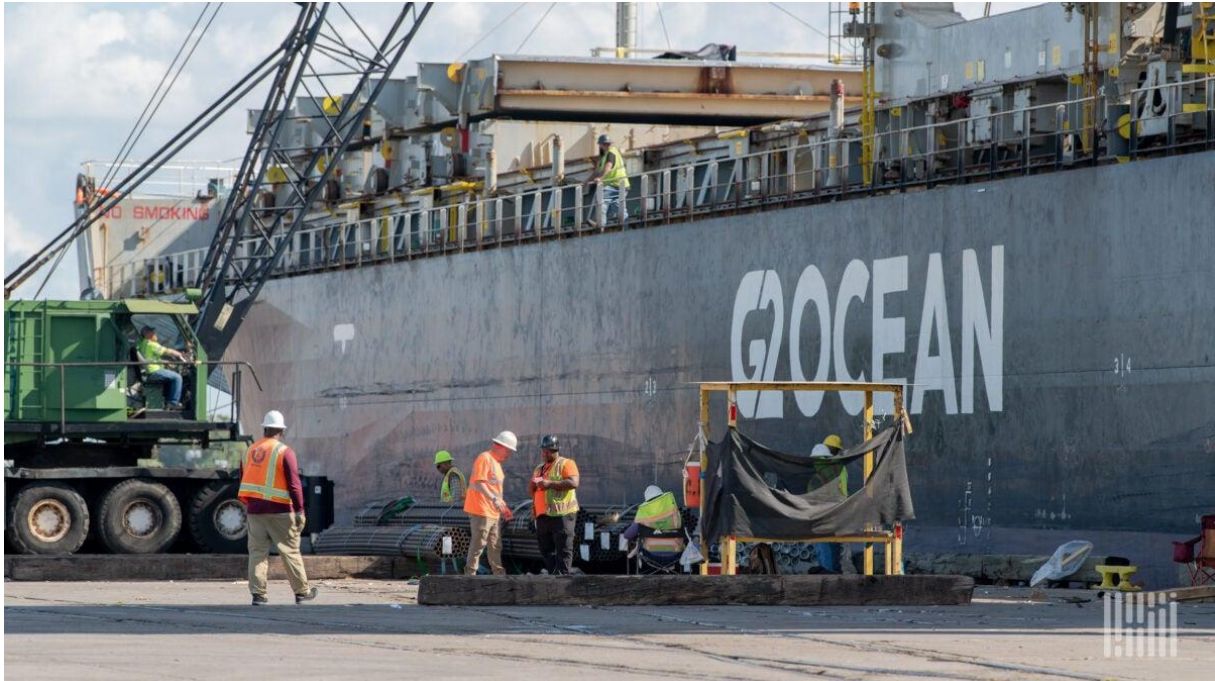


Employers: Still time for East Coast port deal

East and Gulf Coast ports facing Oct. 1 longshore strike deadline

[Stuart Chirls](#)

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Port workers unload a cargo ship at the Port of Houston. (Jim Allen/FreightWaves)

Facing a dire countdown to the first dock strike in decades, employers at East and Gulf Coast ports say a new contract is still within reach, and publicly called for the International Longshoremen's Association to return to contract talks.

"There has been no further progress on Master Contract negotiations – we remain committed to the bargaining process and need the ILA to return to the table," the United States Maritime Exchange (USMX) said in a brief statement Friday.

The ILA, with the current contract set to expire Sept. 30, [has set a strike deadline of Oct. 1](#). Officials on both sides have been reluctant to comment, and it's unclear when the two sides last met for a formal bargaining session.

"While there are fewer than three weeks remaining until the expiration of our current agreement – if the ILA is willing to meet – it is still possible to agree to terms on a new Master Contract," the USMX said.

In a Sept. 7 message to ILA members, President Harold Daggett and his son, Executive Vice President Dennis Daggett, accused employers of "putting profits over people" with what employers described as an industry-leading wage and with regard to automation, and wrote that the sides remained far apart on a new master contract.

Published reports say the ILA has requested a 77% pay raise over the six years of a new pact. Details on employers' proposals have not been made public. West Coast dockworkers represented by the International Longshoremen's and Warehouse Union approved a 32% increase in 2023.

They also pointed specifically to container royalties, which they described as a supplemental wage negotiated as part of the existing master contract.

“Our members should never have to share their container royalty money with the ocean carriers, who are currently making record profits,” they wrote.

The ILA represents 45,000 workers [at three dozen ports from Maine to Texas](#).

“We need to sit down and negotiate a new agreement that avoids an unnecessary and costly strike that will be detrimental to both sides,” the USMX said in its statement.

Editor’s note: The ILA has requested a 77% pay increase over the life of a new contract. A previous version of this story attributed the offer to employers.