

SPEEA members overwhelmingly reject Boeing contract offers



SEATTLE – Confirming what union negotiators have said for months - leadership at The Boeing Company is out of touch with its workforce - engineers and technical workers today (Oct. 1) delivered a stunning and overwhelming rejection of the aerospace giant’s contract offers.

Votes tallied by the Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace (SPEEA), IFPTE Local 2001, show engineers in the Professional unit rejected the offer by 9,770 (95.56%) to 454. Workers in the Technical Unit rejected the offer by 5,327 (97.19%) to 154. Votes were a straight **“Reject”** or **“Accept”** of the offers with no strike authorization on the ballots. SPEEA and Boeing resume negotiations Tuesday (Oct. 2). (www.speea.org) Overall, 71.9% of eligible members voted.

“We hope the vote results clear away the nonsense and allow us to begin substantive negotiations,” said Ray Goforth, executive director. “Until now, meaningful discussions have eluded us because the Boeing negotiating team was convinced they understood the members better than the SPEEA negotiating team. With this question resolved, our expectation is that everyone can focus upon getting a mutually acceptable agreement.”

SPEEA negotiation teams and the union’s governing councils unanimously recommended members reject Boeing’s offers. While the two contracts expire Oct. 6, all major provisions remain in place.

At Boeing’s request, negotiations started nearly one year ago. Boeing rejected SPEEA’s initial proposal to extend the existing contract. Weekly negotiation sessions started in April. SPEEA presented a full proposal to Boeing on June 15. Boeing finally presented its offers Sept. 13. The offers put raises at or below the rate of inflation, significantly increased employees’ share of medical costs, eliminated the pension for future employees and were sprinkled with language that allowed Boeing to change important provisions at any time.

“The offer Boeing tendered was unsalvageable,” said Goforth. “It represented management’s view that SPEEA didn’t actually speak for the membership. It amounted to an evisceration of the collective bargaining agreement.”

In stunning displays of unity, thousands of SPEEA members and retired members participated in lunch time marches, meetings and informational picketing at Boeing facilities around Puget Sound and in Portland last week. The spontaneous events ranged from 2,500 employees marching in the Everett factory to two dozen retirees picketing Boeing’s Seattle corporate headquarters in protest of contract language that allowed Boeing to cut medical coverage for retirees.

A friend of SPEEA since visiting members during the historic 40-day strike in 2000, AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka called on Boeing to start respecting employees.

“The AFL-CIO stands with the engineers and technical workers of Boeing – the hard-working men and women who make Boeing work,” said Trumka. “It’s a shame that a company as successful as Boeing would offer its workers a contract that pads the pockets of those at the top, while imposing disastrous cutbacks on its employees. The SPEEA Professional and Technical workers have shown a lot of courage. They deserve better. We hope Boeing got that message and is prepared to negotiate seriously for a future that includes both profitable business success and hard work properly rewarded.”

While the majority of covered employees are in the Puget Sound region of Washington state, these contracts include employees in Oregon, Utah and California.

A local of the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE), SPEEA represents 26,560 aerospace professionals at Boeing, Spirit AeroSystems in Wichita, Kansas, and Triumph Composite Systems, Inc. in Spokane, Wash.

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