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NEW YEAR GREETINGS

New round of contract talks at Boeing collapse

A second round of bargaining between the Machinists Union and Boeing Co. has proven to be unfruitful.

Machinists District 751 presented a proposal to Boeing Dec. 11 that would have brought labor peace to the airplane manufacturer for the next 16 years, with a guarantee that the 777X would be built in Washington state.

Boeing rejected the offer out of hand, then countered the following day with a "best and final" offer that was little changed from a proposal workers rejected Nov. 13 by a more than 2-to-1 margin.

The counteroffer was rejected by the union leadership.

Several politicians, including Washington Gov. Jay Inslee and U.S. Rep. Rick Larsen (D), criticized union leadership, saying that Boeing's offer should be put to a vote.

Everett Mayor Ray Stephanson, Snohomish County Executive John Lovick, and Port of Everett Commissioner Troy McClelland went a step further, issuing a joint statement that not only called for the Machinists to hold an election — but also urging union members to vote in favor of Boeing's offer.

In turn, several hundred union members made it known via Facebook that they wanted a chance to vote on the new proposal.

The action by politicians drew a

critical response from Jeff Johnston, president of the Washington State Labor Council. In a press statement, Johnston said that while the politicians are entitled to their opinions, "putting their opinions in a press statement is absolutely disrespectful to the Machinists and to the labor movement. That they expressed their views so publicly and so supportively of the company's position reveals how little they understand and respect the collective bargaining process and the generations of sacrifice made by machinists to make this company prosperous."

District 751 officials posted a four-page document presented by Boeing Dec. 11 in which they identified only four changes from the company's Nov. 13 offer. "And they weren't significant," said District 751 Directing Business Representative Tom Wroblewski.

On top of the previously offered \$10,000 signing bonus, employees would have received a bonus of \$5,000, payable in 2020. Employees would have received additional dental benefits of \$500 per person in 2020, and another \$500 per person in 2024.

Boeing withdrew an earlier demand to slow the wage progression for new hires. The offer reverted to the status quo, which is that new hires go to the top of the pay scale in six years.

The company also promised to extend a "letter of understanding" that guaranteed Machinists would keep doing 737 MAX work until 2024, but it offered no contract language on it, leaving union officials uncertain as to how solid the guarantee was.

"Every other item was *exactly the same* as the offer you rejected Nov. 13," Wroblewski posted on the union's website.

As previously proposed, the long-term contract would have frozen the defined benefit pension plan, replacing it with a defined contribution savings plan that was so vague, union officials said they couldn't explain to members how it would work. It

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