

BP Whiting Refinery Workers Begin Contract Negotiations

Discussions start 10 years after union workers authorized a 99-day strike

CHICAGO, IL, UNITED STATES, January 13, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- BP, the London-based petroleum company that owns the refinery in Whiting, Ind., has presented a series of workplace

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Eric Schultz, President, USW 7-1

changes to the employee’s union there – including eliminating over 200 union jobs in operations, maintenance and environmental safety, while also stripping away workplace protections.

BP’s proposal comes as they begin negotiations with [USW 7-1 for a contract](#) that is just weeks away from expiring. The union represents over 900 local residents who bring

decades of experience in operations, maintenance and safety, including fire protection.

It comes after BP has already cut hundreds of key positions at the largest inland refinery in the U.S., allowing their investors to realize 26% returns over the last five years. Union leaders have presented BP’s initial proposal to their members, who immediately recognized how the additional proposed cuts will negatively impact local families and refinery operations.

“The less BP invests here, the more they endanger our community,” said USW 7-1 President Eric Schultz. “We want BP to be successful and can show them ways to operate more efficiently. But it cannot come at the expense of the men and women who’ve dedicated their careers to BP’s success.”

BP’s initial proposal looks to gut the union and calls for the union to waive many of their legal bargaining rights and allow for tracking and A.I. surveillance of union employees anywhere at the refinery.

The union is currently operating under a 3-year agreement that expires Jan. 31. It was just a decade ago that nearly 7,000 union members at 12 refineries, including Whiting, went on strike for 99 days – the largest refinery work stoppage in 35 years. That strike happened in part because of union concerns over safety, training and manpower.

At the time, Whiting had around 1,100 union workers. Today, there are roughly 300 fewer union

employees there. BP has been filling hundreds of vacant positions with lower-paying contract workers from across the U.S., even asking union workers to train those less-experienced, non-union employees.

“We’ve seen firsthand the impact of the cuts BP has made since our last contract and how it has impacted operations,” Schultz added. “Our friends and neighbors in Northwest Indiana have personally experienced the impact of those cuts, as well. We’re just not willing to bargain away a safe workplace and good, stable union jobs so that BP can be more profitable.”

USW 7-1

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