The Daily Dish

Biden's Union Support Comes Back to Bite Him

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From day one, President Biden has promised to be the most pro-union president. In doing so, he has supported the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act (more information on that here), nominated union supporters to the highest roles in the National Labor Relations Board and Department of Labor, and created the White House Task Force for Worker Organizing and Empowerment to promote unions, among other things.

Unfortunately for the administration, its support *of* unions has not led to reciprocal support *from* the unions in making the president's job easier. Instead, union strikes have grown in both frequency and intensity during the Biden Administration, threatening severe economic disruptions that required government interference – and there's more trouble on the horizon.

The following case studies demonstrate this trend.

In 2022, rail unions and companies struggled to reach an agreement over a new contract that included pay raises for members but did not address worker concerns over paid sick days or changes to the scheduling model. A walkout would have caused significant supply chain delays, impacted commuter lines between major cities, and cost the economy an estimated $1 billion in the first week. At the 11th hour, the president signed legislation blocking the railroad strike, reneging slightly on his pro-union promise.

Beginning in April, Teamsters and UPS executives have been in disputes over their contract and are now closing in on strike mode as the contract in question expires on July 31. The Teamsters, on behalf of approximately 340,000 UPS workers, are demanding higher pay for all workers, the resolution of certain health and safety concerns, and "stronger protections against management." The last UPS strike occurred in 1997. It lasted 15 days, involved 187,000 workers, and cost about $850 million. With almost double the number of workers

now threatening to walk out, there is no doubt that the pending strike would be even costlier. With less than two weeks before the contract expires, the president of the Teamsters has already asked the White House not to intervene.

These are just two of the many serious labor disputes under the Biden Administration's watch. You can find more examples here, here, and here.

The administration is caught between a rock and a hard place as it tries to live up to its campaign promise of supporting union goals while attempting to protect against the economic damage that strikes are certain to cause.

How it will find this balance is an open question. What's not in question is that these disruptions won't strengthen the administration's claim that it's managing the economy well.