
Donald Trump Inauguration Protests Expose Labor Movement Split

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Some unions are reluctant to protest Trump. Others are ready to hit the streets.

By now, you've probably heard all about all of the street actions taking place this weekend.

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Tens of thousands of Americans across the country are protesting Donald Trump's presidential inauguration, with their base of resistance in Washington, D.C.

Among them are rank-and-file members of labor organizations from diverse sectors — everything from engineering to fast food service. But not all union workers participating in the counter-inaugural protests are representing their respective labor organizations.

Some workers have been forced to join or help organize non-labor contingents, given that their unions are not officially endorsing the protests. Others, especially those in worker organizations independent from the Democratic Party establishment, are actively endorsing and participating in the demonstrations.

This division exposes a growing split in the labor movement between union leaders who are reluctant to protest Trump and those who are ready to hit the streets.

teleSUR spoke to four members of labor organizations across the country about this split. Here's what they had to say.

Gregory Lucero, a member of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters in Chicago, says his union's leadership is not mobilizing workers for the counter-inaugural protests. Although individuals within his union are participating, neither his local nor international office have called for acts of resistance against Trump.

"Both rank-and-file and leadership see Trump as a threat," Lucero told teleSUR. "I would imagine that the leadership is scared. But they have to make policy decisions for the institution, which is why they are treading carefully against Trump."

Despite his union not formally organizing a contingent at the counter-inaugural protests, Lucero says he isn't missing out on the action. He's one of the main organizers of protests taking place in Chicago this weekend.

"It's up to us, the rank-and-file, to get the unions in motion," Lucero said. "We're the ones in the streets who are fighting him from day one."

The Teamsters endorsed Democratic Party candidate Hillary Clinton in the 2016 Presidential Election.

Flor Rodriguez, director of the CLEAN carwash workers' center in Los Angeles, says she's mobilizing workers for counter-inaugural protests taking place in her vicinity. Her organization is joining dozens of other independent worker centers in Southern California to protest Trump's administration this weekend.

"Rain or shine, we're going to be out marching," Rodriguez told teleSUR. "We are coming together as workers' organizations and showing that we're an important part of this movement."

CLEAN, which did not endorse any candidates in the election, is working to make sure members who encounter any problems with the law during protests have access to an attorney. Many carwash workers in Los Angeles are undocumented and have limited legal resources at their disposal.

"The fight is not over just because he won. Now the fight begins," Rodriguez said. "When bad things like this happen, it's an opportunity to come together. It forces us to organize and fight back."

Joe Lombardo, a member of the Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA) in Albany, says his union is not officially participating in any anti-Trump actions taking place this weekend. While CSEA is not discouraging members from participating, they are not forming an official contingent for protests taking place in upstate New York.

"I think it would be good if they did. I don't think we should have a honeymoon for Donald Trump," Lombardo said. "We need to start opposing the policies he's put in place."

Lombardo, who also serves as the co-coordinator of the United National Antiwar Coalition, is helping to organize counter-inaugural protests taking place in Albany alongside other social justice groups that defend immigrants, women, and people of color. He believes that unions like his have natural allies in other social justice movements and that they should work together to protest Trump's policies.

"A small percentage of people are in unions today," he said. "They (union leaders) have to realize that in order to win anything during this period, we have to make alliances."

CSEA also endorsed Clinton in the 2016 Presidential Election.

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Fernando Ramirez, an organizer with the United Electrical Workers in Los Angeles, says his union is actively participating in anti-Trump actions this weekend. His labor organization was [one of the first](#) to endorse Democratic Party candidate Bernie Sanders for the 2016 presidential election. Ramirez says his group has no problem protesting Trump since he represents values which are contrary to their own.

"For us, Trump is the result of neoliberal policies that have devastated the working class since 1980," he said. "He tried to union bust his own employees and he supports Right To Work laws that weakened our shops."

Ramirez and other members of his union helped organize a mass protest against Donald Trump in Los Angeles the day after it was announced he won the election. Over 8,000 people attended.