

## Casino workers represented by the UAW and Unite Here authorize strike

Written by Administrator

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Gambling revenues were up nearly 5% during the first half of 2015 compared to last year at the MGM Grand Casino in Detroit. (Photo: "Kimberly P. Mitchell/Detroit Fr")

Nearly 6,000 casino workers in Detroit represented by the UAW along with workers represented by Unite Here Local 24 have voted in favor of going on strike if negotiations with the city's three casinos break down.

Union members that work at Greektown Casino, MGM Grand Detroit, and MotorCity Casino voted on Monday to authorize a strike amid ongoing contract discussions. All of the union workers also are part of the Detroit Casino Council, a consortium of unions that bargains on behalf of all of the casino workers.

The UAW has at least four negotiating sessions scheduled in the coming weeks with the three casinos, said UAW spokesman Brian Rothenberg. UAW workers for the three casinos are represented by UAW Local 7777.

Contract discussions with the three casinos began on Oct. 6, according to an update from Unite Here, and the contracts expired on Oct. 16. The two sides have agreed to extend the current contract while they continue to meet to discuss health care, wage and attendance issues.

Representatives from Greektown Casino and MGM did not immediately return calls for comment. A spokeswoman for MotorCity declined to comment on the contract talks.

The financial health of Detroit's three casino is key to the city's future with gaming tax revenue a major component of the post-bankruptcy budget.

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Gaming revenue has been on a roll this year, reversing what had been a gradual decline in gambling revenue since 2012.

Total gambling revenues were up 4.8% during the first six months of this year compared with last year, according to the Michigan Gaming Control Board, which regulates the casinos.

Taxes from casino gaming have lately represented about 16% of the City of Detroit's total revenues, or just under \$170 million.

While a strike authorization vote is typically viewed as a formality it also sends a signal that negotiations between the union and the companies that represent a key source of tax revenue for the city of Detroit.

In theory, a strike authorization vote gives union negotiators more power and leverage during negotiations because it provides them with the ability to quickly call a strike if negotiations do not go well.

The UAW represents more than 12,500 gaming industry workers across eight states including Connecticut, Maryland, Florida, Indiana, Michigan, Nevada, New Jersey, Ohio and Rhode Island.

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