

Union to vote on authorizing Atlantic City casino strike

Written by Administrator

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ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. -- Workers at Atlantic City's nine casinos will vote Wednesday on whether to authorize a strike against the gambling halls, with whom they have not reached new contracts.

The daylong vote by members of Local 54 of the Unite Here union is likely to ratchet up pressure on the casinos to reach new pacts with the union, particularly with the crucial July 4 holiday weekend approaching.

Contracts expired over two weeks ago and talks have yet to reach a new deal.

A "yes" vote will not result in an immediate strike. It simply gives the union's negotiating committee, comprised of workers from all nine casinos, the power to call a strike if and when they see fit.

The union says it is seeking "significant" wage increases in the next contract to help workers deal with financial setbacks caused by the coronavirus pandemic and rapidly rising prices.

The labor dispute comes at an uncertain time in Atlantic City: The casinos and their online partners are collectively making more money now than before the pandemic hit.

But the casinos say those statistics are misleading because they get to keep only about 30% of online and sports betting money, with the rest going to their third-party partners. They say that in-person revenue won from gamblers is the crucial metric, and not all the casinos have surpassed their pre-pandemic levels.

The union went on strike in 2004 for 34 days, and walked out against the former Trump Taj Mahal casino in July 2016, which ended with the casino shutting down in October of that year. It has since reopened under different ownership as the Hard Rock.

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So far, the union has secured agreements with the Ocean Casino Resort and Bally's to honor the terms of contracts eventually reached with some of the larger casino companies in town, but no contracts have yet been agreed upon.

Voting will take place from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Union leadership will announce the result of the vote Wednesday evening after balloting ends.

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