

Submitter: Ian Jackson
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Labor and Business
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB916

My name is Ian Jackson. I live in Portland and am a member of Communication Workers of America Local 7901. I support SB 916 which would repeal the law blocking unemployment benefits to workers on strike. This bill would help ensure that workers are able to stay afloat while fighting for a fair contract.

I have supported striking workers and understand the significant hardship workers undergo when striking to improve their lives and that of their families. Unemployment benefits for striking workers is the difference between paying rent/mortgage, keeping up with bills, affording a COBRA payment, and putting food on the table. Workers go on strike out of necessity for increased standards of living and improved workplace conditions. Striking workers deserve unemployment benefits to ensure corporations bargain in good faith over wages and working conditions, instead of waiting workers out on a picket line. The tables are currently tilted in favor of corporations. Unemployment benefits for striking workers helps level the playing field.

Ending this exclusion of UI benefits for strikes that go over 7 days will help make sure that workers like me can continue to pay our rent, feed our families, afford prescription drugs or pay our COBRA health care payments while out on strike. This will mean that we aren't forced into an unsafe or unfair contract just because the employer can starve us out. And those UI payments will work as intended: to also put money back into the local economy at times of economic distress.

Strikes are always a measure of absolute last resort. Please help ensure that workers like me – nurses, teachers, grocery and construction workers and so many more – are not forced into unsafe or unfair contracts simply because we can't afford to exercise our legally protected right to strike. Please vote yes on SB 916