

New 2019 Data Shows U.S. Workers Participated in Strike Actions at Highest Rate in 30 Years

By James P. Verdi &

February 26, 2020

Meet the Authors



James P. Verdi

Principal

James.Verdi@jacksonlewis.com

Related Services

Labor Relations

Manufacturing

Employers, especially manufacturers, are facing a new (old) challenge in unionized work forces: strikes. The latest data from the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) (BLS) shows U.S. workers are more likely to strike today than at any other time in the last 30 years. This should prompt employers with unionized workforces to review their strike preparedness plans.

Over the last three decades, strikes in the U.S. have decreased, particularly following the 2008 financial crash. In 2017, approximately 25,000 workers participated in a strike. This changed dramatically in 2018 and 2019, when more than 450,000 workers and more than 425,000 workers, respectively, participated in a strike. According to BLS, strike actions in 2019 caused more than 3,200 days' worth of lost work. The number of strikers and the number of days lost to strikes have hit 30-year highs.

The strong domestic economy and continued global competition, among other factors, have created a labor shortage of qualified workers. Unions may see this as the right time to demand higher wage increases and benefits, especially where it was not possible to make such demands during the Great Recession. Workers also may be more aggressive, seeing the relative ease of finding new employment in many areas. At the same time, manufacturers are pressured by tariffs cutting into their supply chains and profits.

The significant increase in possible strike activity suggests that employers should take any threat of a strike seriously. Labor negotiations frequently can become contentious and the threat of a strike is always present. Employers should be ready with a strike preparedness plan that includes a plan of action and a list of possible solutions. Further, any new round of collective bargaining may mean reassessing the plan. Bottom line: proactive labor relations strategies and diligent preparation are critical to protecting employers' operations in the event of a strike.

Jackson Lewis attorneys are available to assist employers with a strike preparedness plan and other labor issues.

©2020 Jackson Lewis P.C. This material is provided for informational purposes only. It is not intended to constitute legal advice nor does it create a client-lawyer relationship between Jackson Lewis and any recipient. Recipients should consult with counsel before taking any actions based on the information contained within this material. This material may be considered attorney advertising in some jurisdictions. Prior results do not guarantee a similar outcome.

Focused on employment and labor law since 1958, Jackson Lewis P.C.'s 1,000+ attorneys located in major cities nationwide consistently identify and respond to new ways workplace law intersects business. We help employers develop proactive strategies, strong policies and business-oriented solutions to cultivate high-functioning workforces that are engaged and stable, and share our clients' goals to emphasize belonging and respect for the contributions of every employee. For more information, visit <https://www.jacksonlewis.com>.