

**From the desk of Representative Dacia Grayber
regarding Senate Bill 916**



The reality of going on strike

Written by Donna Marks - Capital Chronicle



Going on strike is no vacation. It's likely the hardest thing a worker will ever have to do — I know it was for me.

In 2021, after 20 years of working at the Nabisco/Mondelez facility in Northeast Portland, my union, the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers, and Grain Millers International Union Local 364 (BCTGM), went on strike for 43 days.

Voting for the strike wasn't easy for us, but we had no choice. After four years of working under an expired contract with no

meaningful movement from the company, striking was the last chance we had to get Nabisco/Mondelez to sit down and bargain with us in good faith.

Not striking would have meant staying in an unsafe job, working days and weeks without a break or doing something unthinkable — quitting. Meanwhile, the company was making record-breaking profits off of our labor.

Going on strike meant losing income for a month and a half. It meant taking on second jobs to survive, all while maintaining a 24-hours-a-day strike line. I worked 60-hour weeks as a delivery driver to make ends meet, and many of my coworkers did the same. I was terrified that I would lose my healthcare, as my daughter lay in a hospital battling a chronic illness.

Halfway through the strike, my worst fear came true: Nabisco/Mondelez pulled our healthcare.

Thanks to a temporary COVID benefit, we were able to keep our insurance for one month. That's not a benefit available to striking workers today. Without that benefit, I absolutely would have been forced to choose between paying my rent, feeding my family, and paying for my daughter's medical bills.

Many people don't know the realities of striking unless they have experienced it themselves. It's not free time off from work. It is costly and scary. Even if unemployment benefits are given to striking workers, going on strike will continue to have a price.

The Oregon Senate is considering legislation that would help make workers who are in impossible positions not have to face dire situations.

Getting unemployment insurance during our strike would have fundamentally changed our lives. The contract we passed, ending the strike, was extremely flawed, but we were exhausted and pushed beyond our physical and financial limits.

I believe the contract passed because my co-workers couldn't hold out any longer. If the financial stress could have been relieved even a little bit, I have to think we would have stood a chance at winning a stronger contract.

This is the reality for workers across America. Oregon has the opportunity to create a new reality by helping workers stand on more equal footing with their bosses during negotiations.

