

Twin Cities' retail cleaning workers set deadline for June strike

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Retail cleaning workers who work for contracted companies cleaning Target and other stores in the Twin Cities announced last week that they are set to walk off the job again if employers continue to refuse to open dialogue with them and the Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en la Lucha (CTUL), a Minneapolis workers center that has been organizing the workers for three years.

The workers announced their plans in a press conference that was held in downtown Minneapolis.

"Since the last strike in February, we believe that workers' rights have continued to be violated," said Brian Payne, an organizer with CTUL. "Therefore, janitors who work for companies that clean Target and other stores are setting a deadline for a strike starting Monday, June 10 at 5:00 pm. We hope that the cleaning companies will agree to meet with workers and CTUL about the right to organize without fear of retaliation before then."



"I work for Diversified cleaning a Target Store. Many workers only make \$8.50 an hour," said Bonifacio Salinas, a member of CTUL. "That wage isn't enough to survive. We are the ones that do all the work and we need and deserve more. Cleaning companies have continued to illegally intimidate workers—we will be striking to defend our right to organize without fear of retaliation."

If the workers strike, they will join other low-wage workers throughout the country who have

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taken similar action including fast food workers in Chicago, Detroit, St. Louis, New York City and Milwaukee.

"We want our rights and we want to be respected," said CTUL member Emilio Miranda Rios. "In September, I was injured on the job and had to go two months without medical attention because my company, Eurest, refused to accept responsibility. I was out of work for three months with no income, and I had to go to a food pantry just to survive. For eight years I have been cleaning Home Depot and JCPenny stores receiving miserable pay, waiting for better wages and working conditions. I am ready to go on strike to make sure that my rights and the rights of others to organize without fear of retaliation are respected."

"I work for Carlson Building Maintenance cleaning a Target store," said Maricela Flores, a member of CTUL. "I am a single mother raising four kids. With my wage being so low I can't afford to support my family. I am sick and tired of the company ignoring us. The only time they pay attention to us is when they retaliate against workers. That is why I am ready to go on strike again to demand the right to organize."

The group has set the deadline for 5:00 p.m. on Monday, June 10 for retail cleaning contractors like Diversified Maintenance Systems, Carlson Building Maintenance, Prestige Maintenance USA, and Eurest Services to open dialogue with the workers regarding the right to organize without fear of retaliation.

Should the companies not agree to the worker's request by the deadline, the workers have agreed to strike to ensure their right to organize without fear of retaliation, which could occur at any time following the deadline. In such a strike, workers will walk off the job, conducting what is believed to be the second-known strike of retail cleaning workers who clean Target stores in the company's history. The first happened in Minneapolis in February.

Diversified Maintenance Systems is Target's largest cleaning contractor, with contracts to clean over 600 Target stores nationwide. Over the past 10 years, DMS has faced at least:

- 10 federal lawsuits alleging unpaid wages and/or overtime. Earlier this year, a class action settlement was reached between retail-cleaning workers and DMS for \$675,000 in damages. The suit alleged that the contractor forced workers to work up to 80 hours a week without receiving full overtime pay while cleaning Target and other stores.
- Eight Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) complaints, exposing 44 violations of workplace safety regulations.
- Six U.S. Department of Labor investigations, finding 87 violations of minimum wage and/or overtime laws.