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# The On-Demand Economy Should Be Challenged By Workers

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These are exciting times in the so-called "sharing economy," and not just for Silicon Valley techies and billionaire investors. The moment has finally arrived for the people who actually do the work of moving, sharing and renting their goods through businesses like Uber and AirBnB to get some much-needed attention.

Uber drivers in [Los Angeles](#), [Phoenix](#), Dallas and a number of other [cities](#) called for a strike this past weekend to address issues surrounding tips and rates. Earlier last week, [Oregon's labor commissioner](#) said in an advisory opinion that under Oregon law, Uber drivers should be seen as employees. This move opens the door for Uber drivers to assert all the rights normally afforded to employees in Oregon, including the right to a minimum wage, safe working conditions, and workers compensation and unemployment benefits. The advisory opinion contrasts sharply with the company's current practice of classifying its workers as independent contractors.

Oregon and Los Angeles aren't alone. In Seattle, Councilmember Mike O'Brien introduced legislation that would give Uber drivers a new way to work collectively to improve their jobs. In California, Uber faces a class action lawsuit by drivers alleging Uber has misclassified its employees as contract workers -- meaning they miss out on worker protections. And change isn't just coming to the ride share industry. In Los Angeles, Partnership for Working Families affiliate, LAANE, has crafted [data-driven policy solutions](#) to create some of the most comprehensive, enforceable legislation in the country to ensure AirBnB's operations are truly about "sharing" an extra room or sofa.

The new policies, legal actions and organizing efforts (like [Silicon Valley Rising](#)) that are sprouting up around the country aren't merely one off attempts to challenge the Uberization of economies locally. Instead, these initiatives are important signs that workers and communities caught in this precarious labor model are ready for Silicon Valley to use its innovation to benefit all those it employs.

Working people have good reason to be concerned about the rapid rise of the on-demand economy. As [noted](#) by a number of observers, the "new" gig economy actually looks like a familiar continuation of temporary and contingent labor models that working people have been fighting for years. Under this model, workers do not know how many hours or when they will be allowed to work or how much they will earn in a given week or month. It creates instability for workers and their families and ultimately our entire community. While supporters argue that people should have the opportunity to pick up extra cash on the side, offering multiple precarious jobs in place of one good job is not the answer to inequality.

That's not to say that the on-demand economy is entirely bad. It has offered consumers an easy way to access goods. Its innovative model of connectivity has the potential to revolutionize everything from shopping to political action. Yet, if the sharing economy is going to be a major source of work in the future, we need to make sure that it is providing the kind of jobs our communities need. That means a decent wage, access to benefits like workers' compensation, and the right to organize, regardless of the avenue through which those benefits are earned.

No matter how you feel about the sharing economy, the one indisputable fact is that it can't be ignored. With 1 million active drivers globally, Uber is quickly becoming one of the largest global employers. Its current model has major implications for the stability of jobs beyond the transportation sector and across the world. That's why it's so important that our cities and communities are developing new organizing and policy models to match the innovation in the tech sector.

On-demand workers are rising up. It's up to sharing economy innovators to keep pace.

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