

NEWS

## Tech shuttle drivers in Silicon Valley negotiate wage hike

Tech companies in Silicon Valley are under pressure to reduce inequality in the region



By John Ribeiro

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Shuttle drivers for some key Silicon Valley companies will have their first paid holiday on Thanksgiving this week, under new terms negotiated by a workers' union.

Tech companies in Silicon Valley are facing increasing pressure from contract workers to improve working conditions, amid concerns about growing inequality and rising costs in the area.

The use of underpaid contract staff by Silicon Valley companies for functions such as janitors, cooks, drivers and security guards has been criticized previously. "These 'invisible' workers do not share in the success of the industry which they daily labor to keep running," according to a report in August last year by community labor organization Working Partnerships USA.

Nearly 200 drivers who work for Compass Transportation, the contractor to Apple, eBay, PayPal, Yahoo, Evernote, Genentech and Amtrak, have signed a contract under which drivers will be paid between \$24 and \$31.50 an hour, with affordable benefits and a defined contribution pension.

"This is an industry where less than a year ago, the drivers were making between \$17 and \$19 an hour with very little benefits, no paid holidays, no paid overtime or sick leave," said Rome Aloise, international vice president and president of Teamsters Joint Council 7. The drivers will now get 10 paid holidays and nine days of sick leave.

Tech companies are now willing to pay more to their contractors, Aloise said. "Compass had this contract approved by the tech companies," he wrote in an email.

Ebay, for example, said in August it supported a fair compensation package for the Compass drivers, who provide shuttle services for the company's employees, and would absorb the extra cost.

In the wake of protests about the treatment of contract workers, some companies decided to do away with some categories of contract workers and hire them directly on their payrolls. Google said in October last year it would employ on its payroll security guards, rather than have them placed by a contractor.

Teamsters is prepared to organize other categories of workers that wish to benefit from union representation. "We will organize anyone that wishes to gain the advantage of union representation," Aloise said. Over 150 contract warehouse and shipping workers at Google Express delivery service voted in August in favor of representation by Teamsters Local 853 in San Leandro, Calif.

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