

Steelworkers At WV Constellium Plant Strike

The Associated Press

RAVENSWOOD, W.Va. (AP) — About 700 union workers at Constellium Rolled Products in West Virginia's Jackson County are on strike after contract negotiations broke down.

The strike by members of United Steelworkers Local 5668 began at 12:01 a.m. Sunday, media outlets reported.

Constellium said in a news release that the union declined to present the company's latest contract offer to members. Union workers rejected an earlier five-year contract proposal in July and had been working under an extension of the old contract, which expired July 15.

Constellium said it dropped a requirement that workers would have to participate in a company health care plan and pay 10 percent of total health care costs. The company's latest proposal would have required workers to make monthly contributions to their health care benefits and share in future cost increases.

"We are extremely disappointed that the Local 5668 negotiating committee would not allow the membership the opportunity to consider the company's offers and make an informed choice at the ballot box," Constellium Chief Executive Officer Kyle Lorentzen said in the news release. "In my experience, that is how the negotiating process works."

Lorentzen said the company worked hard in an effort to contain health care costs.

Union member Jamie Wolfe said health care is a major issue.

"We just want better health coverage," Wolfe said. "We want to be able to take care of our families."

Contract negotiations broke down last Wednesday and the union issued a 72-hour notice to terminate the temporary contract extension. Constellium said the talks resumed Saturday at the request of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service but the deadlock wasn't resolved.

"No one wins in a strike, and that is especially true for the Ravenswood community," Lorentzen said.

The Ravenswood rolling mill employs about 1,000 workers and is Jackson County's largest employer.

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