

[Airport Workers Rally for Better Wages, Working Conditions](#)

Local News

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SeaTac, WA - Holidays are often stressful for travelers, but the people who hoist the baggage and clean the planes at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport have stresses of a different kind. As a group, they say the Port of Seattle commission has ignored their pleas to require that Alaska Airlines and its service contractors improve their pay and working conditions.

Sylvan Laniyo is a crew leader who makes \$12 an hour loading and unloading baggage. He says the people he supervises make \$9.25, when workers in similar jobs at other major West Coast airports make \$13 or \$14 an hour.

"So far, we've had a meeting about us employees getting an extra 25 cents raise by next year, which still kind of didn't even make any difference, because probably by next year the cost of living's going to go higher too. It just doesn't make sense."

There are about 4,000 baggage handlers, shuttle drivers and people who fuel and clean planes at Sea-Tac Airport.

Laniyo says the contractor he works for offers health insurance, but he and many coworkers cannot afford to sign up. Their concerns are not only about money, he adds, but also about respect for the small army of low-wage workers behind the scenes who keep the airport going, like his ramp crew.

"We try to get your bags to you on time, in less than 20 minutes, so we work a pretty fast pace. We're having a lot of flights coming in and a lot of cargo and mail. A lot of heavy lifting; we're out there in all different types of weather. A lot of hard work."

The rally is at 1:45 p.m. today, International Human Rights Day, at the Sea-Tac Light Rail Station, 17580 International Blvd., SeaTac. It will include clergy members as well as other supporters of workers' rights.

A report released in May found that people working for airline contractors make 27 percent to 41 percent less than those working directly for the airlines. It also said the Port of Seattle and Alaska Airlines are profitable and can afford to do better by their low-wage workers.

The report is online at pugetsoundsage.org.