



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on January 5, 2024

## Trump Meets With Teamsters CEO as Union Weighs Endorsement

Donald Trump's latest bid to build a bridge with organized labor could potentially be the beginning of a new political dynamic in America.

The 45th president sat down for a meeting this week with Sean O'Brien, general president of the Teamsters — which, with one million members, has long been one of the largest and most politically influential labor unions in the United States. The meeting comes as the union considers which candidate it will endorse in the 2024 presidential race.



AP Images

As the [Boston Herald](#) reported, the two men discussed the conditions workers face in the less-than-ideal current economy. A spokesperson for Teamsters told the newspaper that "O'Brien and Trump talked about a number of topics, including 'right to work,' antitrust, and trade."

The outlet further noted:

According to the Teamsters, during the meeting O'Brien was able to secure a commitment from the former president to join O'Brien, Teamsters' General Secretary-Treasurer Fred Zuckerman, and "rank-and-file Teamster members from across the country in Washington, D.C." sometime this January to hold a roundtable discussion. The exact date has not yet been determined, according to a Teamsters spokesperson.

"There are serious issues that need to be addressed to improve the lives of working people across the country, and the Teamsters Union is making sure our members' voices are heard as we head into a critical election year," O'Brien said via the social media platform formerly known as Twitter. "We thank the former President for taking time during this private meeting to listen to the Teamsters' top priorities. And we are eager to bring together the rank-and-file for an important and necessary roundtable with President Trump this month."

"All declared candidates" have been invited by Teamsters to meet with the union's leadership. Thus far, Trump has been the most high-profile candidate to accept the offer. In December, some lesser-known candidates — including Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., former Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson, author Marianne Williamson, philosopher Cornel West, and Representative Dean Phillips (D-Minn.) met with the Teamsters leadership.

The union states on its [website](#) that the purpose of sitting down with candidates is "to discuss how the next President and the Teamsters can work together to empower and protect workers, promote high labor standards, and strengthen the middle class to build a stronger America."

On [Truth Social](#) Wednesday, Trump shared a picture of him and O'Brien together smiling and giving



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thumbs up to the camera. “Looking forward to more discussions about important issues in the near future,” he wrote on the social-media platform.

Having the support of Teamsters could give a massive and much-needed boost to Trump this election cycle. While current polls generally have him pulling ahead of Biden, the edge is close enough that fortunes could easily change between now and election day nearly a year away. The support of Teamsters could potentially tip the scale one way or the other. In 2020, the union endorsed Biden, who is the first sitting U.S. president to ever join striking workers on a picket line.

Teamsters is also one of the few major unions to still be holding out on its endorsement. The AFL-CIO, the biggest labor union in the country, in June endorsed Biden in what is the earliest-ever endorsement in the organization’s history.

The White House expressed confidence that Biden will continue to win support from organized labor. Biden-Harris 2024 spokesperson Ammar Moussa said in a statement to [Politico](#), “President Biden knows that the middle class built America and that unions built the middle class. He is proud to be the most pro-union president in history and looks forward to continuing to work with the Teamsters and workers across America to ensure working Americans get a fair share of the wealth they’re helping to create.”

Nevertheless, Trump has repeatedly made overtures to rank-and-file union members, particularly to those in the auto industry, hoping to entice them with protectionist and trade proposals designed to expand American manufacturing.

Back in October, Trump [vowed to enact](#) tariffs on all foreign imports with the aim of protecting the jobs and wages of American citizens, calling for “an across-the-board tariff on foreign-made goods.”

“I will also pass the Trump Reciprocal Trade Act,” added the 45th president. “If China or any other country makes us pay a 100 or 200 percent tariff, we will make them pay a reciprocal tariff of 100 or 200 percent right back. And as taxes on foreign countries go up, taxes on American workers, families, and small businesses will come down, and down dramatically.”

The Reciprocal Trade Act is notably opposed by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, which in 2019 fought to keep it from being introduced in Congress.

A [study](#) by the non-profit organization Coalition for a Prosperous America (CPA) — which represents manufacturers, workers, and farmers — found that a 15-percent tariff on foreign imports, along with 35-percent tariffs on products in vital supply chains, would produce approximately 10 million jobs and more than \$600 billion in revenue.



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