

PROMOTING WORKER RIGHTS IN THE 2026 WORLD CUP

The men's 2026 FIFA World Cup, hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico (the tri-national committee that created the winning bid known as United 2026), is an opportunity to support organizing and ensure that working people and communities benefit from hosting mega-sporting events. Workers make complex mega-sporting tournaments possible and deserve to share in the massive amount of wealth generated by these events.

Past World Cups have produced low-wage, dangerous jobs; preventable worker deaths; community displacement; and corruption. The global labor movement has campaigned for three decades to demand an end to this exploitation and abuse. As a result of this pressure, the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), the international body that runs the World Cup and other soccer tournaments, promised to create a new model for future World Cups starting in 2026, one which would embed worker and human rights into the design of the tournament.

To win hosting rights, United 2026 made explicit commitments to protect and promote labor and other human rights, including the fundamental right to form and join unions and the right to organize and bargain collectively. United 2026 promised it would assess potential host cities on their vision to ensure that workers can fully exercise these rights, including their inclusion of unions and other stakeholders in the planning process.

The labor movement and our community allies in Canada, Mexico and the United States must organize and demand that FIFA and United 2026 keep their promises. French unions recently negotiated a groundbreaking agreement with the Paris 2024 Organizing Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Games, representing continued advancement in building responsible mega-sporting event management. Workers in the United States must use the 2026 World Cup to not only secure rights in 2026, but also to build on this momentum and create a template for ensuring respect for worker and human rights in all mega-sporting events, including the 2028 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles.

The AFL-CIO will work with its affiliates and allies to do the following:

- Hold FIFA and United 2026 accountable and ensure that all workers involved in the 2026 World Cup can fully and freely exercise their fundamental labor and other human rights. The AFL-CIO will work to ensure that the 2026 host entity and all host cities make meaningful and enforceable commitments to embed labor and other human rights into the planning and implementation of the games, with the active involvement of workers, unions, and other community members and organizations.

- Demand that hosting rights be awarded on the strength of a city's commitment to sustainable development and living wage jobs associated with the games. Economic development also should serve workers and communities, not just the wealthy and well-connected. The World Cup is an opportunity to elevate the need for responsible and responsive local development incentives and policies.
- Support the U.S. women's national soccer team in its fight for equal pay and demand that all workers associated with the 2026 World Cup work free from discrimination in all forms, including gender-based discrimination. We are at a critical moment of energy and activism for achieving real gender equality throughout mega-sporting events.
- Leverage the World Cup to strengthen organizing and solidarity, build power for workers, and advance a high-road model for future mega-sporting events.