

## Stop and Shop Employees Go on Strike in Darien and Across CT, RI, MA

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**Categories :** [Business](#), [Food & Drink](#), [Restaurants & Bars](#)

**Tagged as :** [Stop & Shop](#), [Strike 2019](#), [Strikes 2019](#), [UFCW](#), [United Food and Commercial Workers](#)[United Food and Commercial Workers International Union](#)

**Date :** April 11, 2019



As their fellow union members did across southern New England, at 1 p.m., employees at the two Stop & Shop supermarkets in Darien went on strike, primarily for better health and retirement benefits.

Negotiations with the company hadn't resulted in progress, the employees at the Heights Road supermarket said. The contract expired in February. The strike that began Thursday was the first one against the chain in this area in 30 years, they said.

The parking lot at Stop & Shop on Heights Road had fewer vehicles in it than usual, although the supermarket was still open at about 3:30 p.m., with at least one register still open.

A total of 31,000 employees are represented by various locals of the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union in Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island, where the strike is taking place.

### **Rival Statements**

#### **United Food and Commercial Workers International Union**

The workers were going on strike "to protest the company's proposed drastic and unreasonable cuts to health care, take home pay, and customer service as well as unlawful conduct," the UFCW said in [a statement](#) on

its website.

"The proposed cuts by Stop & Shop, whose parent company earned \$2 billion in profits in 2018, would devastate health care benefits, significantly increase health care costs, and decrease take home pay," the statement said.

The statement also said, "Stop & Shop's parent company, Ahold Delhaize, saw over \$2 billion in profits last year and got a U.S. tax cut of \$225 million in 2017."

The union made these points in describing the company's latest proposal:

- Requires the average full-time employee to pay an additional \$893 and the average part-time employee with employee-only coverage to pay an additional \$603 in weekly health care premiums over three years.
- Reduces the monthly pension benefit for many newly hired full-time employees by 32 percent.
- Many part-time employees would receive an average general wage increase of less than two percent.

## **Stop & Shop**

"Given that negotiations with assistance of the federal mediators are continuing, we are disappointed that the UFCW chose to order a work stoppage in an attempt to disrupt service at our stores. Stop & Shop has contingency plans in place to minimize disruption," Stop & Shop said in [a statement](#) published Thursday on its website.

The company also said its offer to the union is "better than most recent UFCW contract settlements and responsive to heavy non-union competition."

According to Stop & Shop, its offer to the union included:

- "Continued 'Gold Level' health care benefits for eligible associates – at a fraction of what employees at other retail companies pay and with no changes to already unusually low deductibles; and
- "Increased company contributions to the UFCW's defined benefit pension fund for current full- and vested part-time associates – a rare benefit in the New England food retail industry."

"Stop & Shop remains ready and available to meet with the union locals at any time," the company's statement said.