



ILWU Statement of Policy Opposing Anti-Worker Artificial Intelligence and Automation Technologies

The International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) strongly opposes the use of artificial intelligence (AI) and automation technologies to surveil, discipline, and displace workers. We demand strict oversight and a voice in how these new technologies are implemented in our workplaces. Strong regulation is needed at the local, state, and federal levels to protect our jobs, our economy, and our national security from the risks posed by automation and AI.

Automation and AI will lead to mass layoffs

Our members – from hotel staff to crane operators to warehouse workers –are all too familiar with how employers use “new technology” as a smokescreen for reducing hours, degrading working conditions, and eliminating jobs. There is a lot of uncertainty over just how many jobs will be lost to automation and AI in the coming decades. Certain automation technologies, like self-checkout at grocery stores, or self-driving equipment, are already displacing workers in a wide array of industries. Automation technology can also make the jobs that are not automated more exhausting and punitive – for example, as warehouse technology and monitoring systems speed up the pace of work, warehouse workers are increasingly subjected to ever harsher working conditions, leading to injury and exhaustion. The use of automation and AI technologies to eliminate work for actual human beings must be opposed outright.

Serious questions remain over the safety and ethics of AI technologies

AI, automation, and other digital technologies open up our workplaces and communities to a huge number of safety and ethical concerns. There are major data privacy issues with many of the leading AI technologies,ⁱ as well as national security concerns, particularly at our ports.ⁱⁱ AI systems that are trained on biased or discriminatory data end up exacerbating these biases, leading to unfair hiring, firing, and decision-making processes in the workplace.ⁱⁱⁱ AI can create misleading and inaccurate photos, videos, and social media content that fuel division and distrust in our communities. Studies have also revealed the enormously destructive impact that AI has on the environment, as it uses vast amounts of water and electricity and puts immense pressure on the electric grid.^{iv}

AI and automation present grave threats to the supply chain

We call for robust restrictions on AI, machine learning, and automation in port operations to safeguard security, ensure reliability, and maintain human-centered control. AI and automated infrastructure expose high-value supply chain targets^v to foreign infiltration and misuse for malicious intent.^{vi} Reliance on AI produces errors that can lead to catastrophic mismanagement.^{vii} Relinquishing control of our critical supply chains to AI for medical, industrial, agricultural, energy, and military logistics puts our lives and our economy at risk. Most cargo handling equipment is foreign manufactured, with loosely regulated

software creating an enormous security threat. These technologies should only be introduced where there are strong safeguards, including affirmative human oversight, cybersecurity, and transparent audits.

Strong regulation is critical to ensure that these new advances in technology are used to assist – not displace – workers

These emerging AI and automation technologies must be regulated to ensure they are only used to make work more productive and safer, not to surveil, discipline, or displace workers. Absent proper regulation, mass layoffs due to AI lead to falling tax revenue, setting off a catastrophic spiral of reduced government funding for essential social programs and services, at a time when more workers may need government support than ever before. Today's technology companies are some of the wealthiest companies in history – there is more than enough money to ensure that workers do not bear the brunt of these technological changes.

This is common sense, not a partisan or political issue. The ILWU recognizes that all workplaces must adapt to technological change – our Union has been bargaining over the impact of new technologies in our workplaces for generations. We are demanding a seat at the table in negotiating how automation and AI impact our membership and that adequate safeguards be put in place so that these new technologies work with our members and all working people.

ⁱ <https://www.ibm.com/think/insights/ai-privacy>

ⁱⁱ https://www.wsj.com/politics/national-security/chinese-cargo-cranes-at-u-s-ports-pose-espionage-risk-probe-finds-1bc4b75b?gaa_at=eafs&gaa_n=ASWzDAhWtFGS-AyJGhWjbEjXqesF0fyDJNVqf5bZzENK2nikU8cuX4sOGvTDCXp9Mlc%3D&gaa_ts=68702b61&gaa_sig=X3o3wSpazrjVzxBUYDT7yMXSA4S3iEg_YIsEIHKrEx0tqETRGLl-6eKfYCOBecHj8OnFbjtV6l2UT2TmWw28fg%3D%3D

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-legal-doctrine-that-will-be-key-to-preventing-ai-discrimination/>

^{iv} <https://news.mit.edu/2025/explained-generative-ai-environmental-impact-0117>

^v <https://cyberranges.com/how-did-notpetya-cost-businesses-over-10-billion-in-damages/>

^{vi} <https://www.wsj.com/podcasts/the-journal/chinese-made-cranes-at-us-ports-a-new-trojan-horse/7a63eb91-4a85-41c3-ae0-f4d55562e590>

^{vii} <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/05/05/technology/ai-hallucinations-chatgpt-google.html>