

Google workers, labor advocates confront parent Alphabet over practices

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Google workers, labor advocates, and local community members rallied outside parent company Alphabet Inc.'s annual meeting of company shareholders here on Wednesday, calling on the technology company to

change its labor practices.

Employees, including several who presented investor-backed proposals inside the meeting, called on Google to listen to its workforce following a series of walkouts demanding better policies related to sexual misconduct allegations, discrimination, and [contract workers](#).

Silicon Valley Rising, a group of labor unions and activist groups, organized the rally. "The [company](#) needs to focus on listening to [employees](#) from marginalized backgrounds, many of whom could have warned it about many of the major disasters it's faced, many of whom tried to and weren't listened to," said Irene Knapp, a Google employee of more than four years, in an interview with CQ Roll Call at the rally.

Knapp, who is transgender, told protesters that employees should have been part of the discussion from the start, rather than needing to protest.

Knapp presented a shareholder proposal on behalf of an investor during the meeting, which asked the company to incorporate sustainability goals, including metrics for senior executive diversity into executive pay plans.

During the rally, protesters held signs demanding "good jobs now" and "affordable housing now."

Employees who participated told CQ Roll Call they believe Google leaders are listening to workers but not understanding or addressing concerns, and they called for employee board representation.

Marie Collins, an employee of Google for more than six years, said in an interview that she attended the rally and supported worker walkouts because she believes trust between workers and leadership broke down at least a year ago.

Collins said she no longer feels leadership genuinely works to address employee concerns.

"What they need to be thinking about is a systemic solution that involves giving workers a genuine voice in the decisions the company is making both about our working conditions and the people we work with, all the temps vendors and contractors that are treated like second class citizens, essentially, and in the product decisions that affect our users," Collins said in an interview.

She joined the rally after attending the shareholder meeting and asking a question regarding employee board representation.

Google's press team didn't immediately respond to a request for comment on this story.

During the annual meeting, which was streamed on Alphabet-owned YouTube, Chief Financial Officer Ruth Porat spoke about the company's social responsibility efforts, including initiatives to offset greenhouse gas emissions, invest in Bay Area housing and offer digital skills training.

Alphabet has two types of stock with differing voting power, a structure that gives company founders CEO Larry Page and President Sergey Brin control of the company. Alphabet leadership opposed the 13 shareholder proposals up for a vote at the meeting, meaning they're all likely to fail.

A handout from organizers of the rally expressed support for seven of the measures, including requests Alphabet nominate a non-executive [employee](#) to its board, report on oversight of risk related to sexual harassment and share how median pay to male employees compares to the median pay for female workers.

"What brings us together is a belief that it doesn't have to be this way and that we've seen companies take action on specific issues," said Silicon Valley Rising Campaign Director Maria Noel Fernandez, who led the rally, in an interview. "We know it's possible."

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