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# 'A great deal of suspense': Union representing Denver city employees bracing for impact of impending layoffs

The president of Local Union 158, Mike Wallin, believes there will be repercussions for Denver citizens as a result of the layoffs.

Posted 6:46 AM, Aug 18, 2025 and last updated 11:10 AM, Aug 18, 2025



By: Colette Bordelon

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Monday marks the start of an anticipated one-week layoff notification period for City of Denver employees.



DENVER — Monday marks the start of an [anticipated one-week layoff notification period for City of Denver employees](#).

The layoffs are meant to help balance the budget for next year, according to Denver Mayor Mike Johnston. In May, [Johnston announced](#) the city was projecting a \$50 million budget deficit for 2025 and a \$200 million budget deficit for 2026.

In mid-July, Johnston sat down with Denver7 and, in part, explained the reasoning behind the layoffs.

"Laying anyone off is always the very, very last resort," Johnston said. "Usually, sales tax goes up about 5% every year. It's flat this year. Because when you have global t

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The president of Local Union 158, Mark Wallin, said he has had several sleepless nights as a result of the looming layoffs. The union represents employees of the City and County of Denver.

"A great deal of suspense," Wallin said on Sunday evening, explaining how the weekend has been.

Wallin has worked with the City of Denver since 2011. He said there is a sense of pride in the work accomplished while at the city, knowing it serves the people of Denver.

But Wallin — along with the rest of city employees — have been waiting on pins and needles, wondering who will be laid off.



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"A lot of employees  
disconcerting," Wallin said.  
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"I've heard 15% to 30% [of employees], and Denver has about 12,000 employees, so it could be up to 4,000 people," Wallin said.

On July 29 of this year, Mayor Johnston sent the following letter to city employees regarding the layoffs.

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Dear Team Denver,

I want to start by saying thank you. I know budget challenges bring uncertainty, and I'm profoundly grateful for the way you've continued to show up – for your colleagues, for our residents, and for our city – in the midst of all that uncertainty. As I shared in March, the continual slowdown in the economy we are seeing locally and nationally has deeply affected the city budget, and we need to build a budget that fits within the revenues we have.

I want you to know first and foremost that as we work through every hard budget decision, our top priorities remain protecting core city services and delivering on residents' top priorities while preventing layoffs in every instance possible. A number of you have asked for more specifics on the timing of these announcements and I want to share some important updates with you today. We are committed to helping provide transition support to any employee who is affected. We will provide eligible affected employees a severance package, extended health care coverage, and outplacement support to help find their next job.

### Timeline for Layoffs

Where we do have to make layoffs, we want that process to be consistent, equitable, and respectful to those who are affected and transparent for those who are continuing to serve. With that in mind, we will make all layoff notifications over a one-week period beginning on Aug. 18, 2025. During this time, impacted employees will be notified. As is common practice with many organizations, the employee's last working day will be the same day they are notified, unless an approved exception is made with their consent. We believe this approach shows respect for the affected employees by not requiring them to continue working after a difficult decision has been made.

Following notification, employees will receive 30 calendar days of paid administrative leave, during which they will continue receiving their salary and benefits (including time-off accruals). The official separation date will be 31 calendar days after notification. While most benefits will end after this period, medical, dental, and vision coverage will continue through Sept. 30, 2025.

### Severance Packages

We created a severance package that honors employees' years of service to the city and is outlined below. This severance will be in addition to the first paid 30 days of administrative leave every employee will receive upon notification.

Length of Service	Severance
Post probation, less than 1 year	1 pay period (2 weeks of pay)
1 year to less than 5 years	2 pay periods (4 weeks of pay)
5 years to less than 15 years	3 pay periods (6 weeks of pay)
15 years or more	4 pay periods (8 weeks of pay)

Employees who sign the severance agreement will receive their severance payment within 14 days after their employment officially ends. Probationary employees, employees who are retiring and on-call employees are not entitled to severance. In addition, the severance package will also include a stipend equal to one month of the city's share of medical insurance. This will enable any employee to keep health care coverage for at least 60 days after notification of a layoff. We put additional information in the [Layoff Separation Guide on DenverGov.org](#) ([denvergov.org](#)).

### Support for Transition

We're also committed to supporting our employees to find their next job during this transition. The Department of Economic Development and Opportunity's Workforce Development division has assembled a dedicated Employment Transition Assistance team. This team will support impacted employees from the day of separation, offering personalized support, job search and training opportunities, help with unemployment filings and wellness and mental health resources.

These are not easy days, and these are not easy decisions. Every role in this city matters, and every person in those roles has contributed to our city in meaningful ways.

I want to thank each of you – whether you are directly impacted or not – for the heart, talent, and service you bring to this work. This is a moment that calls for our deepest compassion and greatest resilience. And I know that even as we move through challenge, we will persevere together.

With deep gratitude,



Mayor Mike Johnston

City of Denver

"The employees that survive the layoffs are going to be working even harder," Wallin said.

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In 2024, Denver voters approved Referred Question 2U, granting the majority of city employees the ability to participate in collective bargaining. Those collective bargaining rights go into effect at the start of 2026.

In July, the city's career service board [approved changes to the city's layoff procedures](#), making it easier to lay off longtime city employees by removing some of their protections.

"We feel that was kind of crammed through before any sort of collective bargaining or any sort of contract with the employees has gone into effect," Wallin said. "We worry, in the union, that this doing away with the seniority leaves open promotions based on favoritism, based on nepotism."



## Denver7 Investigates goes 1-on-1 with Mayor Johnston after two years in office

The letter from the mayor states that city employees who are fired will receive 30 calendar days of paid administrative leave. The official separation date for those employees will be 31 calendar days after they are notified.

Most benefits will come to an end after that time period, except medical, dental an

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Mayor Johnston ▲

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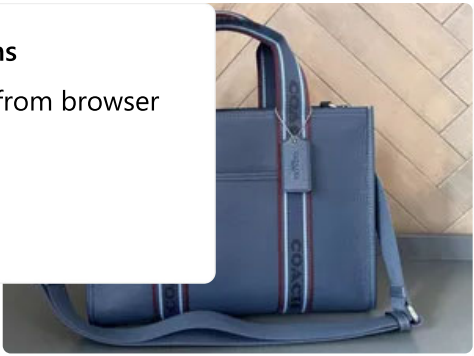
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