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California Uber and Lyft Drivers Complete Historic Three-Day, 500-Mile Caravan for Workers Rights and a Union

Hundreds-Strong Motor Pilgrimage Journeyed Over 500 miles from Los Angeles, Through the Central Valley, to the Bay Area and Sacramento; Drivers Shut Down Uber HQ in Downtown San Francisco, and Surrounded State Capitol with Caravan Stretching Over a Mile

LOS ANGELES, CA – Drawing inspiration from the farm worker movement and utilizing the vehicles that are making Silicon Valley billions, more than 100 Uber and Lyft drivers with the Mobile Workers Alliance (MWA) and Gig Workers Rising (GWR) trekked up and down California over three days in support of Assembly Bill 5, which would properly classify drivers as employees instead of independent contractors, and a path to a union.

The driver caravan departed Monday morning and snaked from Delano, to Fresno, to the Bay Area and Sacramento before finally returning home late Wednesday night.

Along the way, drivers paid tribute to the United Farm Workers at the historic 40 Acres in Delano, staged a rally at the Fresno Chamber of Commerce, shut down Market Street outside of Uber HQ in downtown San Francisco, blockaded capitol streets, and participated in a first-of-its-kind statewide driver congress with drivers from Los Angeles, the Bay Area, and Sacramento.

The caravan, timed to turn up the heat on lawmakers with AB5's senate appropriations committee hearing on Friday, was the largest and longest rideshare driver mobilization to date in California. It also united drivers from the two largest engines of profit for Uber and Lyft in the state, Mobile Workers Alliance drivers from the LA region and Gig Workers Rising drivers from the Bay.

“When we met with the drivers from the Bay and heard their stories, we saw ourselves in them,” MWA member Leonardo Diaz said. “Everywhere it’s lower rates, longer hours, fear of being deactivated for no reason. Seeing that and seeing drivers from Northern California who are just as fired up as we are was inspiring. It gives us all hope that this is a fight we can win.”

AB5, by correctly classifying drivers as employees, would entitle them to basic labor rights like a minimum wage, sick pay, and benefits. Drivers have been calling on state lawmakers to go even further, and ensure that drivers are granted a pathway to unionization and a real voice on the job.

“Uber and Lyft can make all the promises in the world about wages, benefits – all of the things we’re demanding, but at the end of the day, without a union contract, it means nothing,” MWA driver Mike Robinson said. “Unless you have that contract, they can take it all away tomorrow.”

Uber and Lyft have fought the passage of AB5, attempting to get drivers and app users to rally against the bill through in-app messages and emails, hiring high profile political surrogates, and even penning a joint op-ed by executives at both companies – an unusual step for two organizations competing for the same market share.

On the final day of the caravan, both companies sent messages to drivers and users asking them to sign a petition against AB5 and promising to improve conditions for drivers on the condition that they remain independent contractors, in what appears to be a direct response to escalating driver militancy.

“There’s always a threat or a string attached with these companies,” MWA member Linda Valdivia said. “They say if AB5 passes, it will get rid of flexibility. They say they’ll treat us better if we stay misclassified. It just shows how much power they have in this current arrangement. We have to change that balance of power, we need AB5 and a union.”

Uber and Lyft drivers are available for interviews.

Photos of the three-day caravan can be found here:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/183094634@N06/albums>

Videos of the three-day caravan can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8PMBE7zPVn4kJcFvqOHRhA>