Wayfair employees protest, stage walkout over border camp furniture

Making good on their stated plan, scores of Wayfair employees walked off the job Wednesday to protest their company's practice of selling supplies for use in immigrant detention camps near the U.S.-Mexico border.

Photos from the walkout show crowds of protesters in Boston — where the online home furniture retail giant is based — holding signs comparing U.S. immigration facilities to concentration camps, criticizing the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency, and demanding that children not be held in cages.

Participants of the Wayfair walkout gather in Boston's Copley Square Wednesday. Credit: Scott Eisen and Getty Images

Demonstrators also expressed solidarity with migrant families and insisted that Wayfair stop selling items for the increasingly infamous border camps.

Wayfair employees participate in a walkout Wednesday in Boston. Credit: Scott Eisen and Getty Images

According to journalists at the scene, the demonstrations also included people — such as school teachers and children — who were not affiliated with Wayfair but nevertheless came to show support for the company's employees.

A luxury real estate agent’s summer checklist

Prepare for the industry’s busiest season with these 5 tips READ MORE

Demonstrators protest home good retailer Wayfair Wednesday in Boston. Credit: Scott Eisen and Getty Images

Wayfair has not responded to Inman's repeated requests for comment on the walkout this week. Several apparent participants in the demonstrations also did not immediately reply to Inman's messages on Twitter Wednesday.

Protesters criticize Wayfair Wednesday in Boston. Credit: Scott Eisen and Getty Images

News of a planned walkout began making headlines earlier this week, after a letter from Wayfair employees alleged the company had sold $200,000 worth of furniture to BCFS — a contractor that

manages U.S. migrant holding facilities. Among other things, BCFS runs facilities along the U.S.-Mexico border that house children separated from their parents, caregivers and other adults with whom they migrated.

The letter was addressed to company leaders and demanded an end to doing business with BCFS, as well as a new company code of ethics.

Another letter, from Wayfair's leadership, thanked employees for their input but stated the company did not plan to change its policies.

Both letters were widely circulated on the internet — including by a Twitter account that was created to share news about the walkout — and independently obtained by the *Boston Globe*.

Wayfair currently has more than 12,000 employees, according to *Fortune* magazine, and more than 500 had reportedly signed the employee letter as of Tuesday. It was not immediately clear how many people participated in the walkout and ensuing demonstrations Wednesday, though photos from the scene appeared to show a crowd of at least several hundred people.

One reporter who covered the event also suggested the crowd may ultimately have swelled to several thousand people.

> Quick math tells me several thousand people have convened here. They stretch from the steps of Copley Square to the lawn in front of the @BPLBoston #WayfairWalkout pic.twitter.com/hHd6NgFiKf
>
> — JanelleNanos (@JanelleNanos) June 26, 2019

Migrant holding facilities have become increasingly controversial in recent months, with Democratic Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez referring to them as "concentration camps" and recent firsthand reports painting a grim picture of deteriorating conditions, with children under 10 left to care for infants they didn't know.

News that Wayfair was supplying furniture for the facilities has sparked a debate over what role a company should play in controversial government policies.

That debate has spilled over into the real estate world thanks to both the massive size of Wayfair, as well as its forays into the real estate world via partnerships with companies such as vacation

rental firm Vacasa.

Email Jim Dalrymple II

Source: click here