WASHINGTON (AP) — Rail companies and their workers reached a tentative agreement Thursday to avert a nationwide strike that could have shut down the freight train network and devastated the economy less than two months before the midterm elections.

President Joe Biden announced the deal, which emerged from a marathon 20-hour negotiating session at the Labor Department and came just one day before the threatened walkout.

“This agreement is validation of what I’ve always believed — unions and management can work together ... for the benefit of everyone,” Biden said at the White House.

The deal, which includes a 24% pay raise, will go to union mem-

bers for a vote after a cooling-off period of several weeks.

The threat of a shutdown caused economic risks for Biden, a Demo-
crat who believes unions built the middle class. But he also knew a

rail strike could pose grave eco-

nomic risks ahead of midterm

elections when majorities in both chambers of Congress, key governorships and state legislatures will be up for grabs.

Biden made a key phone call Wednesday evening to Labor Secretary Marty Walsh as negotia-
tors were talking and being offered Italian food for dinner, accord-

ing to White House officials who spoke on condition of anonymity be-

cause of the sensitivity of the conversations.

On speakers phone, the president urged both sides to get a deal done and to consider the harm that a shutdown would inflict on families, farmers and businesses, the of-

ficial said.

One union had to wake up its board to move forward on the agreement, which involved 50 calls from White House officials to organized labor officials.

**TENTATIVE**

**BE PREPARED**

**WEATHER**

**High 64**

**Low 48**

Partly cloudy. A few showers.

Details, A6

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**INDEX**

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Lotteries

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**GETTING BEHIND**

As busy work days play out,

no such thing as doing nothing.

Nelson, A2