App-based works deserve benefits, but not a fixed schedule

Donna and Roger Evans

When the pandemic hit, thousands and thousands of Colorado drivers, shoppers and other app-based workers stepped up to help our state survive throughout this public health crisis. And we are still at it.

Personally, we turned to app-based work long before the pandemic hit due to living off of a fixed retirement and disability income. We enjoy driving because we get to help our community, meet new people and we can do this whenever and for however long we want. And we get to bring people a little joy while doing it. We've had unforgettable conversations and we love decorating our cars for each and every holiday including Valentine's Day and St. Patrick's Day.

Being independent workers has helped us financially, but it has also allowed us to prioritize ourselves. After years of long-haul driving and other odd jobs, we found something we can make work for us even in retirement. We are able to supplement our income and build work around our lives, not the other way around. If the weather is rough or when we need to take care of ourselves, we can stay home without being afraid to lose our source of income. We can work when, where and however long we want. It is a relief to know that we always have the option of driving, and that we have the option of taking as many days off as we need!

There are those who want to force us to become employees and sacrifice everything that we value about independent work. These people have not walked in our shoes, and they don't understand how important it is for us to have this kind of flexibility. It is exactly why we are able to do this kind of work and without the flexibility we wouldn't be able to work. A recent news article reported on a survey of Colorado independent workers and found that 91% of drivers could not continue their work as independent contractors if flexibility was jeopardized.

We do not want to be classified as employees, because this changes the foundation of what we love about driving with Lyft. Becoming employees would mean set schedules, fixed wages, and limits on when we could drive, and this is all under the assumption that you would be able to get one of these jobs in the first place.

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While we enjoy being independent workers, we know that there are still ways in which the system can be improved where we can have access to benefits for us if we want them.

The truth is we shouldn’t have to choose between flexibility and having certain benefits to rely on. As essential workers, we should have access to benefits like health care and retirement contributions, occupational accident insurance, income support during major crises like a pandemic, and discrimination protections.

We know that the answer is simple: we should have benefits, and maintain the freedom to set our own schedule. We should be able to have benefits, while keeping what we want the most: flexibility. The freedom we have driving with Lyft is life changing for us and we wouldn’t trade that for anything.

Donna and Roger Evans are appbased workers.
It’s important that app-based workers are heard on what we need and want.