

Workers Struggles: The Americas

Strikes continue in Argentina over Milei's anti-labor legislation; USDA to allow increase in meatpacking line speeds.

23 February 2026

The World Socialist Web Site invites workers and other readers to contribute to this regular feature.

Strike continue in Argentina against Milei's anti-labor legislation

In the wake of the 24-hour general strike of February 19 against the anti-labor rights legislation of the Milei administration, protests in metropolitan industrial Buenos Aires continued on February among transport workers and other workers that had been stopped by the CGT union from joining the general strike. High school and college students have marched together with the workers. As is common in such protests, demonstrators banged pots and pans and chanted slogans against the "labor reform."

Workers rallied at the National Legislature, joining teachers, artists, retirees, and students.

There were also pickets at the FATE tire factory that recently shut down, leaving hundreds of workers with no jobs. The demonstrators were attacked by police, who broke up the rally.

Retired workers protest in Guerrero state Mexico

Scores of retired workers on Social Security in the State of Guerrero (Isspeg) protested on Friday February 20, surrounding the Government House in the city of Chilpancingo and demanding payment of delayed benefits and the firing of government functionaries that refuse to talk to them. 7,400 retirees depend on Isspeg across the state.

The demonstrators, some in wheelchairs denounced the delays in payments and the bad administration of Isspeg.

The demonstrators also denounce Isspeg corruption — with officials getting rich while at the same time cheating the retired workers out of their pension pay, from as far back as 2013. In some cases, workers are suspended from Isspeg, following the receipt of their first check.

Mexican health workers hold protest at the federal capitol

On February 19, Health workers employed by the Mexican Institute for Health Services (IMSS-Bienestar) from across Mexico, surrounded the National Government House demanding President Claudia Sheinbaum intervene to guarantee sufficient medicines and negotiate decent working conditions. They also demanded the rehiring of Doctor Belem Benitez, fired on October 24 by the IMSS for revealing to the public the shortage of essential medications.

The demonstrators came from the states of Oaxaca, Najarit, Sonora, Baja California Sur, Zacatecas, Mexico State, and Mexico City.

Benitez spoke at the rally, describing IMSS increasing risk to health workers from infectious diseases, particularly as measles cases escalate. She denounced the fact that new health workers are being hired as "workers on tap", disregarding days and hours of work, giving the IMSS leadership an opportunity for attacking labor rights.

The IMSS protesters were totally ignored by Sheinbaum and government officials.

Protests by Brazilian indigenous groups against Cargill warehouse

On February 22, members of indigenous groups occupied the Cargill soybean warehouse in the port of Santarem in Para State. Forty percent of soybean exports go through Santarem port.

The occupation is part of protests by 14 Amazonian tribes against plans to dredge the Tapajos River and against a decree signed by President Luiz Inacio Lula that sets the stage for the privatization of three Amazonian rivers that together add up to 2,500 miles.

The demonstrators have also blocked roads leading to the Cargill terminal. Cargill management claims it has no interest in the dredging of the Tapajos, used to transport soybeans to its warehouses, although it stands to benefit. One of the protesters carried a sign that read: "Water is to transport life, not capitalism."

Amazonian rivers are utilized by the tribes as a source of fish. Already, in part due to years of illegal mining, the Tapajos is heavily polluted, affecting its use by the tribes.

In a letter to Lula the tribes declared that "rivers are not export channels; they are a source of life, sustenance, memory, and identity for thousands of families. The Lula administration has not responded.

USDA to allow increase in meatpacking line speeds

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced February 17 it would permit the line speed for slaughtering animals in meatpacking plants to be increased to “remove outdated bottlenecks so that we can lower production costs...” The slaughter rates for chickens will increase from 140 to 175 per minute, while that for turkeys from 55 to 60 per minute. Caps on pork plants are to be eliminated and left to corporate management.

The USDA’s proposal also removes worker safety authority from its own Food Safety and Inspection Service and place it under the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). In 2025, OSHA saw its staff cut by 9 percent.

Food & Water Watch responded to the changes, stating, “Corporate poultry and hog processing plants are hotbeds for disease and antibiotic resistance. To protect workers, consumers, and animals, these dangerous facilities need more oversight — not less.”

Mark Lauritsen, vice president for the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), cited past USDA studies that drew a direct relation between faster line speeds and higher worker injury rates. “This proposed rule ignores those studies and seemingly any consideration for worker safety,” said Lauritsen. “Today’s move risks taking us back to the days of Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle*..”

The UFCW’s claimed opposition to the increase of line speeds, however, is contradicted by the unions’ decades of collaboration with management to undermine workers’ struggles against this very threat through destruction of master agreements, imposition of wage and benefit cuts and the sabotage of grievance procedures.

Arizona legislature proposing draconian penalties against protest actions by teachers in wake of anti-ICE killings

A bill is being proposed in the Arizona legislature that would prohibit public school teachers from using sick days in support of protests and impose severe penalties where they occur. The legislation comes on the heels of protests that erupted in Tucson in response to the ICE murders in Minnesota of constitutional observers Renee Nicole Good and Alex Pretti.

Republican representative Matt Gress, a co-sponsor of the bill stated, “When adults coordinate mass callouts to shut down campuses, that is a strike in practice... If someone organizes a work stoppage, they should not retain the privileges and protections of public employment.”

Teachers found in violation would be stripped of benefits, reemployment rights and civil service protections. Their district or charter school they work in would suffer partial defunding.

Palmyra, New York machinists strike over living standards and working conditions

Some 250 workers at Garlock Sealing Technologies in Palmyra, New York, went on strike February 16 after negotiations failed to

meet their demands for wages that match inflation, increased retirement benefits, affordable healthcare benefits and greater safety standards. Members of International Association of Machinists (IAM) Local 588 rejected management’s most recent offer two days earlier.

Contract talks resumed as workers took up positions on the picket line. Workers carried out a three-day strike back in 2021 before agreeing to a four-year contract.

Garlock fabricates gaskets, pipe seals and joints. The company is owned by Enpro, a US-based company with 61 primary manufacturing facilities in twelve countries.

Back in 2010, before being absorbed by Enpro, Garlock filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy as a result of mounting liabilities due to personal injury lawsuits related to the asbestos-lined gaskets that the company manufactured.

Saskatchewan Catholic school workers vote to strike

Hundreds of Saskatoon Catholic school support workers, members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), have voted by 90 percent to take strike action should a new contract not be reached. The educational assistants, librarians, maintenance and other support workers in the Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools system are demanding a wage increase that adequately addresses the spiraling cost-of-living crisis that they have experienced over the past several years.

The strike vote comes after mediation efforts at the end of January failed to reach a settlement. Rather than prepare for strike action and set a strike date, union officials have called for management to return to the bargaining table despite a months-long impasse in negotiations.

Education workers at Yukon University move toward legal strike position

Should a new collective agreement not be reached over the next several days, about 400 education workers at Yukon University can take strike action as early as March 2. The workers, members of the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) in association with the Yukon Employees Union, have been without a contract for 18 months. Workers are demanding that management address job protections for precarious “gig” contractors and a “fair” wage increase for all members to compensate for inflationary pressures. The university, with its main campus in Whitehorse, also provides educational services in 11 other communities across the Yukon territory.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)