

Workers Struggles: The Americas

Bolivian Workers Federation declares “state of emergency” over anti-worker laws; Ten thousand Corewell Health nurses in west and southeast Michigan taking strike vote

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

Bolivian trade unions declare a “state of emergency” against anti-worker laws

The Bolivian Workers Federation (COB), declared on February 25 a “state of emergency” against anti-worker measures recently imposed by the Rodrigo Paz administration, including restrictions on the right to strike, a 12-year maximum penalty for worker protests that block roads, and threats on peasant land ownership.

In a reference to the anti-labor rights legislation proposed by Argentina’s Milei administration, and approved by Congress, the COB declaration denounced the Bolivian government’s “modernization” (i.e., destruction) of labor rights won through years of struggle. Among those rights are the retirement age and the length of the workday.

The COB statement, however, gave no details about their proposed mobilization of the working class.

Oil workers demand that Brazil provide Cuba with petroleum products

On February 26, oil workers, together with left-wing legislators rallied at the headquarters of the Petrobras national oil company, demanding immediate shipments of fuel to Cuba, thus challenging the oil embargo imposed on that island-nation by the Trump administration.

The protest was called by three oil worker trade unions, Sindipetro-RJ, Federação Nacional dos Petroleiros (FNP), and Federação Única dos Petroleiros (FUP/CUT).

“Our demand is crystal clear: that Brazil’s largest corporation immediately ship oil and its derivatives to an island that is going through a massive black-out and is on the verge of a humanitarian

catastrophe,” declared a statement by the oil workers unions, distributed at the rally.

Also joining in the protest were youth groups and left-wing organizations.

Venezuela educators demand pay rises and collective bargaining rights

Scores of Venezuelan educators and workers rallied on February 26 demanding wage increases and the restoration of trade-union rights. Wages in Venezuela have been frozen since 2022, under conditions of massive inflationary price hikes. The purchasing power of today’s minimum wage, 130 Bolivars, amount to 31 US cents, down from 30 US dollars in 2022.

The demonstrators are demanding that wages and retirement payments, at a minimum, be set to the cost of basic necessities.

Among the demonstrators, teachers reported their wages have fallen by 50 percent; “We are paid in Bolivars and we have to purchase in Dollars,” read one sign. Educator Raquel Figueroa addressed the crowd: “Salaries have long ceased to have social and economic significance. They have become a means of political and social control, creating poverty.”

In addition, the demonstrators demanded the restitution of collective bargaining rights and liberation of imprisoned workers.

10,000 Corewell Health nurses in west and southeast Michigan taking strike vote

Corewell Health nurses have begun voting on strike authorization for a first contract. The 10,000 nurses are members of Teamsters Local 202 and have been in talks since June 2025. Significant issues remain unresolved, including wages, discipline and grievances procedures, staffing and access to decent health care.

The healthcare system operates more than 20 hospitals and over 300 outpatient locations across west and southeastern Michigan.

The union says Corewell has not been seriously engaged in negotiations. Speaking to a local FOX affiliate, one nurse, Debbie Miracle, a member of the bargaining team from Corewell's Farmington Hills location said, "I feel like they aren't seriously bargaining with us because they think that they can intimidate us into taking what they give us." She added, "Once again, they are underestimating how willing nurses are to fight for what we deserve and what our patients deserve."

The Teamsters have allowed management to drag out negotiations at Corewell while hundreds of nurses at Genesys Hospital in nearby Grand Blanc, Michigan have stood on the picket line since September over demands for safe staffing levels. This continues the Teamster policy of dividing various sections of workers to prevent a powerful united struggle.

The results of the strike vote will be announced March 17. There is no indication that the Teamsters plan to set a strike deadline at Corewell or a list of bottom line demands.

New York City hotel workers prepared to strike during summer FIFA World Cup

The Hotel Trade Council, which represents some 27,000 New York City hotel workers, has indicated it will launch a strike during this summer's FIFA (International Association Football Federation) World Cup unless the Hotel industry group comes to terms over wages, benefits and terms governing contract enforcement. The World Cup will run from June 11 to July 19 and the United States games will be hosted by New York and New Jersey, likely bringing in some \$3 billion in economic activity.

The contract covering New York City hotel workers is scheduled to expire on July 1 and involves some 250 hotel properties.

Hotel Association of New York City president and CEO Vijay Dandapani has charged the union with holding the city hostage. Meanwhile, there are rumors that New York hotels plan to double rates during the World Cup.

San Francisco Superior Court clerks strike over caseloads

Some 200 San Francisco court clerks went on strike February 26 after negotiators for the Superior Court refused to consider proposals by workers to address the unbearable increase in caseloads. Rob Borders, a member of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 1021 bargaining unit, which represents the workers, declared, "The increased caseload has been ongoing for the last two years, and the courts made little effort to try to address it. Other than just making us work harder, work faster, we don't want to be in that position, because we don't want to make mistakes."

Clerks administer scheduling, paperwork and court orders. Mistakes can have critical ramifications for people caught in the justice system, leading to longer jail internment and warrants issued that shouldn't be issued.

"They've allowed the staffing level to get so low here that they haven't been able to adequately train people for some of the assignments that were put in," Borders told ABC7. The unfair labor practices strike is open-ended.

Brantford, Ontario steelworkers strike

About 120 workers, members of the United Steelworkers (USW) are in the second week of a strike at Slacan Industries in Brantford, Ontario situated just north of Hamilton. Slacan is Canada's largest designer and manufacturer of steel pole line hardware for the electrical utility and communication market.

The workers had voted 99-2 for a strike after rejecting management's demands for concessions. The walkout is the first strike at the company in over 35 years. Slacan is attempting to remove retiree benefits from any future contract. About half the workers in the plant are long-time veteran workers. In addition, management has refused to include contract language for training and has failed to offer a wage increase that adequately accounts for the erosion of compensation due to years of inflationary pressures

Scab drivers deployed in northern Ontario school bus strike

Now in the second week of their strike for a living wage, some 80 school bus drivers in Sturgeon Falls in north-eastern Ontario are fighting a scab operation launched by management from Alouette Bus Lines. The bus line provides transportation for 1,900 students on more than 50 routes spread throughout the Sturgeon Falls area. The company has deployed scab drivers to service some of the key routes in the municipality.

The striking drivers, members of the United Steelworkers, are demanding a wage increase to \$22 per hour. Currently, they earn only \$18.11 per hour, barely above the provincial minimum wage of \$17.60 and well below the area's basic living wage of \$21.10 per hour. On average, a school bus driver only receives three to five hours of work per day.



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