

Workers Struggles: The Americas

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

Immigrant workers hold protest march toward Mexico City

On August 20, 800 migrant workers took off on foot from the Tapachula, on Mexico's southern border, towards Mexico City. The migrants, from El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Cuba and Haiti, including entire families with pregnant women, children and the elderly, unable to enter the US, are marching in search of jobs within Mexico and demanding immigrant status.

The march began with the support of civil authorities in Tapachula and Chiapas State. Accompanying them is an ambulance provided by a human rights group. The caravan has adopted the name "Dream with no Borders."

The immigrants declared that their decision to begin this long caravan was triggered by the long delays and corrupt practices of immigration authorities, that prevent them from getting jobs in Tapachula. "With no documents, it is hard to find work; if one does, the pay is very low," declared a participant from Nicaragua, who was deported from the US two years ago. His priority now is to find a job within Mexico.

A Honduran marcher hopes to find work in the industrial city of Monterrey. "I am told that there is lots of work there," she said.

Human rights organizations estimate that some 65,000 immigrants that originally intended to enter the United States are now seeking legal status and work in Mexico.

Comodoro Rivadavia bus drivers in Argentina hold protest strikes

Bus Drivers in the Port City of Comodoro Rivadavia, in the Southern Province of Chubut, carried out protest strikes throughout last week, demanding payment of back wages. The protest strikes in most cases took place spontaneously, independent of the trade union apparatus.

The 296 drivers have yet to be paid their July wages. On August 1, the city-owned bus company was handed over to a private firm, Sol Bus, which proceeded to lay off 75 drivers and, since then, has ignored the workers' demands.

The protesters are also denouncing the role of their union, Argentine Transport Workers – UTA, for siding with municipal authorities and company management.

Throughout the week, the drivers carried out protests: slow marches

on the main roads in the city, and rallies at city government buildings. Negotiations on August 20 produced no agreement. Workers have made it clear that they will accept no partial settlements to their wage demands.

Strike leader Jorge Valdez, one of the rank-and-file workers that organized the protest strike, declared that the city has offered to pay 103 workers (out of 296 drivers). His answer was that "our struggle will end when every worker receives all the money owed."

Chilean gig workers protest wage cut

Delivery workers employed by the CCU beverage company rallied in Santiago on August 20. At issue is the company's decision to cut workers' compensation for distance traveled. The workers, who drive their own cars, were recently surprised by the company's sudden 50 percent cut in their rate per kilometer driven.

Protesting workers declared that the fuel rate cut is the latest in a series of company job cuts and speedups; the "last straw (La gota que colmó el vaso)" according to the strikers.

CCU is owned by Grupo Luksic, one of the richest corporations in Chile, with a wealth equivalent to \$52.6 billion US dollars.

Sibanye-Stillwater miners in Montana rally as company drives for concessions

Miners who work for the global mining and metal processing company Sibanye-Stillwater held a public meeting August 13 at United Steelworkers Local 11-0001 union hall in Columbus, Montana, to review the status of contract negotiations after the 450 workers rejected two contract proposals by 93 percent and 84 percent. The company is demanding cuts in healthcare, short-term and long-term disability benefits, a wellness program and the gutting of an incentive program while the union is only trying to preserve past benefits.

Daniel Beluscak, president of Local 11-0001, said of the concessions demanded by the company, "The easiest way to describe it is a land grab on our benefits." The union is only calling for a 5 percent wage increase compared to the company's offer of 4 percent, despite the fact that Sibanye-Stillwater's wages lag behind those of other mining operations in Laurel and Billings.

One miner at the meeting described the company's objective, "They want us to break 45 percent more rock, but they don't want to pay us for it." Workers are also wary that the company's incentive policy, which would be tied to a reduction in injuries, would discourage

workers from reporting injuries.

The Columbus mine mainly produces palladium, and Sibanye-Stillwater is the largest producer of palladium in North America. When palladium prices fell in 2024, the company laid off 700 workers.

The company's global operations are profitable and it is one of the primary producers of platinum, palladium and rhodium, and is also a top-tier gold producer. But the company's US operations lost \$288 million in 2025 and \$388 million in 2024.

The company anticipated a turnaround based on the Trump administration's tariffs against Russian palladium, but those tariffs were removed.

San Jose, California, city workers overwhelmingly vote for strike action over wage compensation struggle

Two city unions representing 4,500 workers for the City of San Jose, California, voted by a 97 percent margin to grant strike authorization as the two sides are at loggerheads over wages. City management has limited its wage proposal to 9 percent over a three-year contract while the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers Local 21 (IFPTE) and the Municipal Employees' Federation (MEF) – AFSCME Local 101 are seeking a 14 percent wage increase over the same period.

The unions announced that any strike would be limited to three days. At the same time, both the union and the city have requested the California Public Employment Relations Board appoint a three-person panel to start a fact-finding process that would issue non-binding recommendations.

The unions are also seeking discussions on limitations to the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI). The city administration claims it is strapped for cash and Mayor Matt Mahan is protesting it cannot spend money it does not have. A strike would affect the city's libraries, maintenance, housing services, animal care, public works, certain airport operations and community programs. It could potentially be San Jose's largest strike since 1981.

Negotiations are ongoing and no strike date has been set.

3,600 University of Vermont Medical Center workers launch rolling protests as contracts expire

Two unions at the University of Vermont Medical Center (UVMHC), in Burlington, Vermont, began a series of rolling banner pickets August 14 as contracts covering 3,600 support staff and technical workers expired. Support Staff United and Vermont Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals, which represent licensed nursing assistants, custodial, dining, imaging, and X-ray techs and others began bargaining back in April and negotiations have stagnated over safe staffing, healthcare benefits and wages.

Workers are also demanding protections for immigrants, and that management commit to refrain from lobbying to block legislation that would fund universal healthcare or primary care. Back on August 7, workers submitted 4,000 signed petitions calling on UVMHC to end

its slow walking of negotiations.

UVMHC management has offered a mere 1 percent cost-of-living increase while reporting earlier this month that the healthcare system projects a \$43 million budget deficit for 2027 with a further financial deficit of \$300 million over the next three years. Management is also pushing for an end to the past union-management process that allowed an airing of grievances over staffing plans and is instead demanding complete control to dictate staffing ratios.

Licensed Nurse Assistant Saer McCillian spoke at a rally that kicked off picketing, "[C]ritical understaffing has become built into the standard operating procedure of this hospital. No one expects this work to be easy, and it isn't—but every day, we are asked to do more with less. The consequences are dire. My coworkers have been punched in the face. They've had ribs fractured. They've had fingers broken. Patients' needs go unattended as the work piles up. ... We are here because safe staffing is not a luxury. It is not an unreasonable demand. It is a requirement for safe patient care."

Housekeeper Andrea Oberg declared, "[S]urviving within this state has become harder and harder to afford. Every year my rent goes up \$100. After paying rent and bills, there are times when I struggle to afford groceries. Keeping my refrigerator stocked is difficult, and most days I'm simply trying to stretch what little I have to cover the basics."

Victoria, British Columbia bus drivers launch uniform ban protest, joining Metro Vancouver workers

Around 750 British Columbia transit workers in Greater Victoria, members of Unifor, began a job action last week. Brushing aside demands for strike action the union sanctioned a uniform ban, where the workers refuse to wear company issued clothing on the job.

The action was taken after more than a year of failed negotiations. The workers are demanding better wages, sick leave, dental benefits and improved recovery time/breaks for late-running buses. Regular bus schedules continue without service disruptions.

The action in Victoria follows on from a similar uniform ban amongst 5,000 bus drivers and mechanics in Metro Vancouver that also began last week. In that contract dispute, bus drivers, SeaBus crews and mechanics, also members of Unifor, had earlier rejected for a second time an inferior contract offer from Coast Mountain Bus Company management. On June 22 the workers rejected a tentative settlement placed before them by their union. Earlier this month they voted again to reject another proposed agreement.

The Vancouver workers are fighting for wage increases and improvements to onerous working conditions and grueling shift schedules. In both disputes Unifor officials have worked to block the membership from taking strike action.



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