

Health workers and students stage protest strikes against cuts by Chile's far right Kast administration; After strike is shut down by provincial NDP, Manitoba lab workers designated "essential"

Workers Struggles: The Americas

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

Educators and staff at Argentina's universities launch 72-hour protest strike over funding

On Wednesday September 30, workers and educators employed by Argentina's national university system initiated a 72-hour strike. At issue is a wage demand of 33.4 percent and that the Milei administration obey a university finance law approved late last year by the national legislature. The strike was accompanied by protest rallies in Buenos Aires and other cities in the country;

No response has been forthcoming from the executive branch, despite a court order mandating the Milei administration carry out the funding law.

Healthcare workers and students stage protest strikes against cuts by Chile's far-right Kast administration

On Tuesday September 28, Chilean healthcare workers carried out a 48-hour strike to protest budget cuts being imposed by the right-wing administration of José Antonio Kast. The strikers, and other workers supporting them mobilized with marches and rallies in Santiago, Valparaíso and other major cities.

The strikers, belonging to the 70,000-member National Federation of Municipal Health Workers (CONFUSAM) demand the expansion of health budgets across the nation.

One of the biggest protests took place at the National Legislature headquarters in Valparaíso. The legislature is set to discuss the 2027 budget with more cuts in store for health and education, together with the "consolidation" (i.e., elimination) of several government ministries, as well as increases in the military budget.

Following the strike, on October 1, Chilean students mobilized in national protests against Kast's education cuts for 2027.

In Santiago, Chile's capital, a peaceful protest march by thousands of students was attacked by the police. The helmeted government gendarmes, carrying shields, marched into the demonstrators in downtown Santiago, aiming chemical sprays at students' faces and utilized water cannons and tear gas to block and disband the demonstration.

A section of the protesters managed to circumvent the police and rallied at Chile's government house.

Protest strikes against the Fujimori administration in Peru

On Thursday, October 1, hundreds of striking construction workers protested in Lima, Peru's capital, against President Keiko Fujimori's labor reforms and against her attempts to rule by decree, taking on the role of the legislative branch.

Construction union leaders presented their 2027 National Claims Document to the legislature, which includes improved working conditions, higher wages, and a 44-hour workweek, down from the current 48-hour standard, with no loss in pay.

Other demands have to do with lower fuel prices and improved medical care for workers.

Triggering this and other protests this week is President Fujimori's demand that Congress grant her the right to rule by decree for 120 days on eight subjects, including labor conditions and rights.

United States

Duquesne Light workers strike in Pittsburgh

Nearly 1,000 workers at the Pittsburgh-based utility Duquesne Light walked out on October 1 in a dispute over staffing levels, safety and the use of technology to cut jobs. The workers, who are members of International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 29, repair power lines, troubleshoot outages and assist over 600,000 customers across Allegheny and Beaver counties.

IBEW officials say the shortage of linemen and operational problems have slowed power restoration times, including after April 2025 storms, which killed three and left hundreds of thousands without power. The privately owned utility made over \$172 million in profits in 2025.

New Jersey refinery workers authorize strike over wages, benefits and contract language

Workers at the Phillips 66 Bayway Refinery in Linden, New Jersey, voted by a 92 percent margin September 29 to grant strike authorization, ahead of the October 1 contract expiration. The 385 process and mechanical workers, members of Teamsters Local 877, are demanding higher wages, improved benefits, guaranteed time off and oppose management's attempt to alter safety and absentee policies.

In 2025, management introduced a new absence control policy that imposes disciplinary action up to termination for workers who miss work due to sickness. The company is also seeking to undermine safety, reducing qualification requirements and shortening the current 30-month training period for new employees. At the same time management is provocatively trying to increase the probationary period for workers from the previous 10 months to an astounding six years.

Phillips 66's New Jersey refinery is considered the largest refinery on the East Coast, producing 275 million barrels of crude oil and 145 million barrels of gasoline products on a daily basis. A strike would come as petroleum companies are reaping massive profits due to the Trump administration's war against Iran, which has resulted in the closure of the Strait of Hormuz through which some 25 percent of maritime oil trade is conducted.

A strike would further tighten fuel markets in the Northeastern US. Phillips 66 has refineries in the United States, Great Britain and continental Europe.

Contract talks resume for striking Alton, Illinois, city workers

The city of Alton, Illinois, resumed contract talks with striking city workers for the first time since July 17. Members of Teamsters Local 525 who work for the city's public works division maintaining streets, animal control, forestry and parks, walked off the job back on August 9 over wages and healthcare benefits.

The city has held firm on its proposal for 3 percent annual wage hikes over a four-year contract. The Teamsters is calling for 4 percent per year. The extra 1 percent amounts to an increase of a mere 30 cents per hour.

The two sides initially contended over health insurance, where the city's proposal would have increased premiums by 300 percent for workers. The union pressed for the city to adopt the union-controlled TeamstersCare, which Local 525 said would save the city up to \$20,000 per year.

Jay Steinhauer, Local 525 business agent, said of TeamstersCare that the city is "now saying they are open to that," and that it "would take a big chunk off the plate." Currently, the city is also negotiating with police, fire and office workers and the Teamsters is angling to get all public employees enrolled in the union healthcare plan.

Corvallis, Oregon city workers issue 10-day strike notice

The union representing 246 workers for the city of Corvallis, Oregon issued a 10-day strike notice on September 30 as negotiations have failed to reach an agreement over wages and benefits. AFSCME Local 2975, which represents the workers, began negotiations back in January of this year and the old agreement expired on June 30.

City management wants to raise medical and dental insurance costs for workers. It is offering a total of 12 percent wage increases across a three-year agreement. The union is calling for a pack of wage hikes amounting to 14 percent.

The two sides are at loggerheads over a demand by workers for

longevity pay for years of service. City works employees have suffered a 77 percent turnover in the past four years. But management has declared they are "philosophically opposed" to the proposal.

Behind the deadlock is a looming \$8.1 million deficit for the coming biennial budget. The state mediator has scheduled one more negotiating session on October 8 as the countdown towards a possible strike as early as October 14 nears.

Canada

After strike is shut down by provincial NDP, Manitoba lab workers designated "essential"

Last week the Manitoba Labour Board ruled that lab technicians at blood testing company Dynacare are now designated as "essential" workers. Technicians can no longer go on strike unless they first find agreement with Dynacare management on essential services coverage even though an extensive network of provincially run labs could continue to provide basic services.

The ruling is yet another escalation in the drive to strip provincial workers of their constitutionally guaranteed right to strike. The ruling will encourage Dynacare management to stonewall negotiations for a new contract.

Only a few hours after a strike began September 8, involving about 350 laboratory technicians and technologists at Dynacare, Manitoba New Democratic Party (NDP) Premier Wab Kinew sent government lawyers to the provincial Labour Board to obtain a strike-breaking back-to-work order.

Shortly thereafter, the board issued an interim order compelling the workers to resume full services while it reviewed whether their work should be classified as "essential," thereby eliminating their ability to strike. The Manitoba Association of Health Care Professionals (MAHCP) bureaucracy quickly bowed to the anti-worker diktat and instructed the strikers to disband their picket lines and return to work the following day.

Prince Rupert longshore workers strike

One hundred and fifty workers, members of the International Longshore Workers Union (ILWU), are in the first week of a strike in Prince Rupert, British Columbia. The strikers are employed at the Trigon Pacific Terminals. Trigon operates the Ridley Island bulk export terminal and handles coal and petroleum coke for shipment throughout the Asia-Pacific region. Canadian National (CN) rail is dropping the bulk products off at the terminal's rail yard, where scab labour is reportedly handling the deliveries. Managers have also been deployed to move the coal shipments.



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