

Mersen USA Union Workers Picket Plant to Protest Third Announcement of Job Cuts

Workers Demand Accountability After Billion-Dollar Multinational Takes \$505,000 in Public Subsidies and Recently Secures \$10M Federal Defense Contract

COLUMBIA, TN, UNITED STATES, February 9, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- IUE-CWA union workers at the Mersen advanced materials manufacturing plant in Columbia, Tenn., held an informational picket on Friday, Feb. 6, 2026, demanding accountability for what they describe as a “malicious pattern” of job cuts and relocations. This marks the third time the company has moved to eliminate local positions since workers voted to unionize in 2024.



IUE-CWA members at Mersen held an informational picket to protest job cuts in Columbia, Tenn., on Friday, Feb. 6, 2026. (Photo Credit: Orvin Caraballo / IUE-CWA)

The protest highlights a stark contrast between Mersen’s public image and its treatment of its workforce. In 2019, the company received a [\\$505,000 public FastTrack grant](#) to expand operations in Tennessee and recently secured a [\\$10 million contract](#) from the U.S. Defense Logistics Agency. Despite these investments, Mersen has announced plans to shut down its LWG Department in Columbia and relocate those jobs to Pennsylvania by February 27.

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*Mersen process operator
Rickey Frierson*

Workers also note that the first round of cuts following unionization involved relocating ISO department work to Pennsylvania during the 2024 holidays, which they say

established a troubling pattern that is now being repeated.

“Mersen is a global giant based in France with over \$1 billion in annual sales, yet they are choosing to displace local families and ship their livelihoods out of state,” said union

representative Orvin Caraballo. “After taking taxpayer money and promising long-term growth in this community, turning around and cutting these jobs is a slap in the face to every resident of Maury County.”

A Pattern of Instability and Broken Promises:

*Third Layoff Announcement: This is the third attempt to cut or relocate Columbia jobs since October 2024. While workers successfully organized last summer to stop a planned round of 2025 holiday layoffs, management has returned with a new plan to eliminate union positions.

*Public Funding, Private Cuts: Mersen accepted over a half-million dollars in taxpayer-funded subsidies to expand operations. Workers argue that receiving public funds while shipping jobs to Pennsylvania betrays the promise of “good, stable jobs” made to the community.

*Economic Irony: In [corporate reports](#), Mersen touts its resilience and strong performance in the electrical distribution and defense sectors. Workers question why a company with a new \$10 million U.S. federal contract is claiming strain requires the elimination and relocation of local jobs.

*Cuts Over Contracts: Instead of working constructively toward a first contract that protects jobs and stability and providing the IUE-CWA an opportunity to bargain over recent job cuts, management has prioritized layoffs and relocation.

“Columbia residents deserve to know why their tax dollars are supporting a company that is actively eliminating local livelihoods,” said Mersen process operator Rickey Frierson. “We’re fighting to protect Tennessee jobs for us and future generations and to hold this company to the promises it made when it took our public money.”



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Mersen workers demand accountability for job cuts after the billion-dollar multinational takes \$505,000 in public subsidies and recently secures \$10M in federal defense contracts. (Photo Credit: Orvin Caraballo / IUE-CWA)

Workers are demanding decisional and effects bargaining and are calling on management to work with them to keep the LWG Department in Columbia and secure a fair labor contract that provides long-term stability for Tennessee families.

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As the Industrial Division of CWA, IUE-CWA represents a force of 150,000 active and retired men and women united collectively to seek dignity on the job and a secure future for ourselves, our children and all future generations.

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