

# UAW says contract passed at Ford amidst claims of ballot stuffing, intimidation

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The United Auto Workers claimed late Friday night that its agreement with Ford had passed by the narrowest of margins, amidst widespread claims of voter intimidation and fraud.

With only the Dearborn Assembly Complex still to finish voting, the contract was headed for defeat on Thursday, as the UAW required an overwhelming majority “yes” vote at the remaining plants to push it through. In the last few days of the vote, workers at major assembly plants in Kentucky and Chicago, Illinois had rejected the deal by a two-to-one margin.

The UAW claims that it achieved this improbable feat. “Our UAW members have ratified the national agreement after a long process and much debate,” UAW President Dennis Williams said in a written statement.” Ford released a statement saying that the contract “provides a good foundation for Ford Motor Company, our employees and our communities.”

According to unofficial results posted on Facebook Friday night, UAW Local 600, which covers the Dearborn complex, is claiming that workers at Dearborn Truck backed the deal by 2,620 to 939, or 73 percent. A tally that did not include Dearborn Stamping, Dearborn Engine and one smaller plant showed the contract being approved by a margin of 135 votes out of 38,559.

Absolutely no confidence can be placed in the integrity of these numbers. Many workers reported overwhelming opposition at Dearborn and complained of irregularities during the vote on Friday.

A tier-two worker with one year at Dearborn Stamping, speaking to the WSWS earlier in the day, said, “Everyone I talked to says they voted to turn it down. They are mainly against the eight-year progression for tier-two workers. They don’t think it will actually happen. In Canada they did something like

that, and the workers still haven’t gotten their money.

He said that there were questions about the integrity of the vote, “I have heard some people talking that the vote is going to be the way the UAW wants it to be regardless.”

The most popular comment on the UAW International’s own Facebook post announcing ratification stated: “The votes didn’t matter. It was going to pass regardless. That’s how crooked they are.” Other workers demanded a recount and investigation.

Another worker posting on Facebook before numbers were being reported said that he had talked to two local UAW committeemen and “they feel confident DTP Local 600 overwhelmingly voted this down. Only time can tell though.”

The conclusion of the vote came two days after a hastily called press conference addressed by UAW Vice President Jimmy Settles and UAW Local 600 President Bernie Ricke. The pair threatened, pleaded and lectured workers in an effort to shift the vote in favor of the agreement. They complained that autoworkers, and particularly younger workers, were not sufficiently “educated” about the “process” of negotiation. (See, “With Ford pact in jeopardy, UAW intensifies economic blackmail”)

Settles and Ricke told workers that if they voted “no,” they would lose their jobs. They also made clear that any strike would be used as a weapon against workers, with strikers strung out on \$200 a week pay from the UAW’s \$600 million strike fund. Prodded by the journalists, Settles said Ford would hire scab workers and the UAW would do nothing to stop them.

In an effort to prevent any critical questions, UAW operatives forcibly removed reporters from the WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* from the press conference and stole the cell phone of one of the reporters. A video

recording of the incident was widely shared online and viewed by more than ten thousand autoworkers. Workers at Detroit Assembly reported that it was being passed along the line and galvanizing opposition to the contract.

As workers voted on Friday, they confronted a gauntlet of UAW officials demanding that they back the deal. According to some reports, UAW functionaries drove around the plant on Friday drumming up “yes” votes, even bringing ballots directly to workers. The voting period was extended to give the UAW greater time to manufacture a “yes” vote.

A worker posted on Facebook: “Now union is driving around in their cart trying to get anyone who didn’t vote on the voting days to vote yes. ‘If the contract isn’t pushed through you will be on the street!’ And can they drive around and take votes with [the] ballot box on the back of their cart?”

Another wrote: “The union guy [was] driving around with the ballot box on his car. After [people] came up to me telling me they were pushing yes votes.”

The UAW has been under immense pressure from the auto companies to ensure a “yes” vote at Ford one way or another. The executives who control the organization are terrified that if they fail to perform their assigned task—push through pro-company agreements—their lucrative relations with the corporations will be threatened.

The entire process has only further discredited the UAW, which is widely despised as a company union by autoworkers. It is a corporate-labor syndicate and a business in its own right, which conspires with the companies and the state to intensify the exploitation of the workers it claims to represent.

The widespread opposition at Ford followed the defeat of the first contract at Fiat Chrysler (FCA), with a second version pushed through after a campaign of threats and lies orchestrated by the UAW’s PR firm BerlinRosen. Then came the vote at General Motors, where the UAW claimed that the contract passed by a narrow margin, but had been defeated by skilled trades workers. According to the UAW constitution, a national contract has to be ratified separately by both production and skilled trades workers, but on Friday UAW executives overrode the skilled trades vote and declared the contract ratified.

The claim of a “yes” vote at Ford only confirms that opposition to the attack on autoworkers can be carried out only through the formation of independent organizations, rank-and-file factory committees to unite Ford, GM, FCA and all autoworkers with their brothers and sisters throughout the country and internationally in a common struggle against the corporations and their stooges in the UAW and the AFL-CIO.



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