

Who is UAW Vice President Cindy Estrada?

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Following the strike vote by workers at the Fiat Chrysler Automotive (FCA) transmission plants in Kokomo, Indiana, autoworkers should be keenly aware of who and what they confront. Of particular interest is the recent transfer of Cindy Estrada from the United Auto Workers' General Motors division to head the FCA division.

Since joining the union as an organizer in 1995, Cindy Estrada had risen rapidly to become the first woman in line to take the top job in the UAW, before reports of her potential involvement in the elaborate scheme of payoffs and money laundering that has engulfed the union apparatus. On November 2, 2017, the *Detroit Free Press* reported that Estrada had been named as the "latest target" in the FBI probe of corporate-union corruption.

That investigation has exposed two of the main conduits of slush fund money as UAW-company training centers and bogus charities set up by union officials. The Cynthia Estrada Charity Fund allowed its legal registration with the state of Michigan to lapse in July 2017, and her stepdaughter was employed by a corporate-union training center.

At the UAW Constitutional Convention in Detroit this June, UAW officials claimed that the corruption scandal, in which at least \$1.5 million was funneled from FCA via joint training funds into the pockets of union officials, was the work of a few "bad actors." Now it has been revealed that former UAW President Dennis Williams has been implicated in the scheme.

Despite this, at the same convention UAW delegates voted to give top union officers huge raises, including a raise for UAW vice presidents, including Estrada, to \$180,591.

As vice president in charge of negotiations with GM, she played the key role in ramming through the 2015 contract in violation of longstanding union policy that a contract rejected by the skilled trades department

cannot be accepted overall. She took charge of the union's FCA department this past June, just prior to the strike vote in Kokomo.

Indicative of her subservience to the corporations, the UAW vice president and GM department director published the following statement in connection with the corporation's announcement of \$1 billion of investments in the U.S.

"Today's announcement continues GM investments that have emerged as a result of the 2015 national bargaining agreement. ... We will continue to work with GM to bring more product to the United States and enhance the job security of our UAW members."

What she meant by "job security" was revealed in a secret memorandum of understanding she negotiated covering workers in Lordstown, Ohio and Lake Orion, Michigan. In April the *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter* published segments from Estrada's statement to rank-and-file workers noting that a secret deal had been cut in February to permit GM to replace legacy workers who receive full pay and replace them with subcontract workers at half pay and few if any contractual protections.

She admitted that the decision to destroy fully paid jobs was "agreed to by the involved local, regional, and national leadership."

"Everyone agrees that this situation sucks," she continued. "But what would suck even more would be to have GM shut down any of our plants and devastate hundreds of our members' lives and the communities where those plants exist."

What she means by "job security" was protecting the dues income flowing to the coffers of the UAW by replacing fully paid workers with workers getting half pay, lousy benefits and no rights.

In an effort to blackmail UAW members to swallow her betrayal, she cited the recent wave of job cutting that GM had carried out with the full backing of the

UAW.

“In 2017, GM’s car production was cut by over 20 percent, with the biggest impact to small cars. We saw the reduction of six shifts of assembly plant production and volume reductions at our Powertrain, Stamping and Components plants. There are currently nine open shifts of production in our assembly plants. GM is analyzing the future of many of their car products.”

Estrada was only repeating the timeworn lies of the UAW that concessions and handing over the gains won by autoworkers in generations of struggle would “save” jobs. Since the UAW first initiated its campaign of “job-saving” concessions at Chrysler in 1979-80, more than one million jobs have been wiped out in the auto industry.

In 2014, Estrada oversaw the sellout of workers at the Lear Seating factory in Hammond, Indiana. After shutting down a one-day strike, the UAW claimed it had abolished the two-tier wage system at the plant. In reality, the deal replaced two tiers with three, including so-called “sub-assembly” workers earning even lower wages. The UAW has already signaled that it is willing to do the same thing for GM, Ford and Fiat Chrysler.

In October 2015, Estrada attacked the WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* for publishing “half truths” and “crap.” She and the union apparatus as a whole are enraged at the WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter*, not for lies but because it tells workers the truth.

During this same period, the UAW slashed new hires’ wages, divided workers into tiers, raised dues fees, and agreed to a no-strike clause.

Any involvement by Estrada in the ongoing negotiations in Kokomo should be viewed with suspicion. It is a further argument for rank-and-file control over negotiations. This includes a line-by-line copy with all the normally concealed “letters of understanding,” the major briefs presented by both sides in reaching the agreement, notes from the union and the company, and any other relevant material used to reach the agreement.

The real reason the UAW won’t give these details is because if workers knew what was being planned they would rebel.

Autoworkers must take it upon themselves to build rank-and-file committees that are free from the authority of the UAW. In every factory, workers should elect such committees, made up of the most militant

and self-sacrificing workers, to mobilize the ranks to demand that all the details of the negotiations be made public.



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