

UAW presidential candidate Will Lehman calls for support for Ventra and GM Subsystems workers

Our reporters
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For more information on Will Lehman's campaign, visit WillForUAWPresident.org.

United Auto Workers presidential candidate Will Lehman issued a video statement Monday supporting the formation of a rank-and-file committee at auto parts company Ventra and denouncing the efforts of the UAW bureaucracy to block a united struggle of all autoworkers.

Last week, workers at the Ventra plant in Ewart, Michigan voted by 94.5 percent to defeat a UAW-backed contract, which maintained poverty-level wages, imposed higher out-of-pocket health care expenses on workers and did nothing to end the sweatshop conditions at the plant.

On Thursday, the UAW bureaucracy announced a last-minute deal covering 700 workers at GM Subsystems, a low-paying subsidiary of General Motors. A strike by the material handling and warehouse workers could have quickly shut GM's key assembly plants in Detroit, Lansing, Lake Orion and Flint, Michigan.

Lehman, a 34-year-old manufacturing worker at a Mack Trucks plant in Macungie, Pennsylvania, announced his campaign for the UAW presidency last week.

In his latest statement, he declared his solidarity with the Ventra and GM Subsystems workers, saying they were in a crucial battle, which deserved the support of all rank-and-file workers, against both the corporations and the UAW bureaucracy. "The ruling class of corporate owners is not going to make concessions anywhere unless forced to by workers. But everywhere workers are blocked from using our strength by corrupt union officials that defend profit, not the needs of their own members," he said.

The "last thing UAW President Ray Curry and the rest of the leadership in the misnamed Solidarity House headquarters in Detroit want is a strike at one of the parts companies. This is the same thing the UAW did at Dana and Nexteer last year."

Lehman denounced the statement of UAW International rep Dan Kosheba who arrogantly told Ventra workers, who only make \$14-\$17 an hour, that they could not get any higher raises because they are "not the Big Three."

"In fact, until the 1980s, independent parts workers had nearly as high wages as Big Three workers. The UAW agreed to cut the wages of parts workers to boost the Detroit automakers' profits and then backed the GM's and Ford's spinoff of Delphi, Visteon and American Axle to pit Big Three and parts workers against each other."

Lehman hailed the decision of the Ventra workers to form a rank-and-file committee and cited the point they made in their founding statement: "We're all part of one relationship. You can't work without us, and we can't work without you. We all need each other. And we've all got to stick together for solidarity and to make sure we win a better life for ourselves and the whole working class."

"Over the last two years," he concluded, "we have seen an increase in strikes and other struggles by UAW members, from Volvo Trucks, Dana and John Deere, to the current CNH strike, and the fights at Ventra and GM Subsystems. This is part of the growing struggle of the working class across the US and the world. I am running to abolish the pro-company UAW bureaucracy, to put rank-and-file workers in power and unite the working class to fight for equality for all."

*For more information on Will's campaign,
visit WillForUAWPresident.org.*



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