

UAW presidential candidate Will Lehman calls for delegates to nominate him at upcoming convention

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The World Socialist Web Site is reposting below a letter that Will Lehman, a Mack Trucks worker running for president of the United Auto Workers, is sending to all delegates to the Constitutional Convention of the UAW. The convention is being held in Detroit, Michigan, from July 25–28.

The WSWWS has endorsed the campaign of Lehman for UAW president. To find out more about Lehman's campaign, visit WillforUAWpresident.org.

To UAW Convention Delegates:

My name is William Lehman. I have been employed for five years as a Mack Trucks worker in Macungie, Pennsylvania. I am running for president of the UAW International.

The court-appointed Monitor has accepted as valid my declaration of intent to run for president. To appear on the ballot in the elections, however, I must be nominated at the UAW Convention, which begins on July 25. I am asking you to nominate me so that I can present to UAW members in the upcoming election a real alternative—based on the defense of workers' class interests—to the corrupt Solidarity House apparatus that functions as an industrial police force acting on behalf of the corporations.

The corruption scandals of the last several years have exposed the unbridgeable chasm between the Solidarity House apparatus and the union rank and file. In fact, direct elections are being held for the first time only because past UAW presidents and other high-level union executives were indicted and convicted of stealing workers' dues money and accepting bribes to sell us out.

The corruption has not been a case of "a few bad apples." A healthy organization does not fall prey to criminals. The corruption of the union is inseparably

connected to the UAW bureaucracy's subordination of union members' interests to the corporate drive for profit. The taking of bribes from the auto companies is only the most extreme and criminal expression of Solidarity House's collaboration with the corporations and the betrayal of the workers it falsely claims to represent.

For more than four decades—starting in 1979 with the UAW's acceptance of concessions as a condition of the bailout of Chrysler—the Solidarity House apparatus has turned the union into a pro-corporate police force. All its efforts are directed toward collaborating with the corporations to maximize their profits. Toward this end, the UAW uses the vast resources of the union to suppress every form of rank-and-file resistance to corporate exploitation.

Concessions contracts have become the norm. Every basic principle of working-class solidarity with which unions were originally associated have been abandoned. The union enforces a tier-system of wages that makes a mockery of unity. Strikes, the most essential weapon of struggle against corporate greed, have been suppressed for decades. And in the rare instance when they cannot be prevented, Solidarity House—determined to preserve the strike fund as its personal property—places strikers on starvation wages.

For the rank and file, the entire policy pursued by the UAW over 40 years has been a catastrophic failure. The wages, working conditions and benefits of workers have declined, year after year and contract after contract.

I am running based on a program to transfer power to the rank-and-file. The time has come to break up the apparatus whose payroll runs into the tens of millions of dollars annually. Hundreds of individuals on the

Solidarity House payroll receive six figure salaries. They live comfortable lives, totally remote from the real-life experience of the hundreds of thousands of UAW members who struggle day after day to make ends meet.

It is necessary to end all the UAW-corporate bodies, such as the “joint training programs,” that have served as slush funds for the apparatus. The resources built up with the dues money of workers must be under the control of the workers themselves, to assist us in our struggles. The decisions of this organization affect the lives of millions of people, including our families. They should not be made in secret meetings with the companies, but democratically, on the shop floor, for all to see.

Official inflation has now reached 9 percent, and the reality is worse than that. Workers can’t afford these increases to gas, rent and food expenses under the sellout deals forced through by the apparatus. We need massive pay increases, Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLA), an end to tiers and full funding of pensions for all retirees, no matter what. We don’t care what the company says it can afford, this is what our families need.

As a critical element of this struggle, we must unite with our class brothers and sisters throughout the world, and reject the nationalist perspective that the UAW has promoted, which has secured neither our jobs nor our working conditions. There are massive strikes and protests throughout the world over the same issues we confront.

It is imperative that in this election workers have a real choice, that there is as broad a field of candidates as possible. In an earlier period, there were real alternatives reflecting the views of the rank and file and different political tendencies. This democratic tradition was stamped out long ago, which freed the way for the bureaucracy to implement its disastrous course.

My appeal is to those of you who recognize the dead end into which this apparatus has led UAW workers, and who will therefore support the right of workers to vote for me this October and November.

I ask for your support, not on my behalf as an individual, but to restore the democratic rights of the rank and file and place in their hands real control over the UAW.

For more information on my campaign, you can visit

my website at WillForUAWPresident.org or write to me at willforuawpresident@gmail.com.



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