

# UAW ends three-day “Hollywood strike” at Stellantis Kokomo casting plant

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The United Auto Workers reached a tentative agreement Sunday night and rushed through a ratification vote Monday, ending a brief strike by 1,000 workers at the Stellantis Kokomo Casting Plant in Indiana. In a one-sentence note on its Facebook page Monday evening, UAW Local 1166 officials announced a tentative agreement had been ratified without releasing any details of the vote.

The UAW shut down the local strike, which began Saturday morning, before it had any significant impact on the automaker. A prolonged strike at the plant, known as the world’s largest die cast facility, would have halted production of key transmission/transaxle cases, engine blocks and aluminum transmission components, leading to the rapid shutdown of all of Stellantis’ operations and a major hit to its profits.

But that was never the intention of the UAW, which has spent decades colluding with management in gutting the wages, benefits and working conditions of workers to boost corporate profits. Instead, discredited and hated UAW officials like President Ray Curry and Vice President Cindy Estrada used the three-day strike to posture as fighters for workers’ rights.

The strike was carefully stage-managed from the beginning. Like scores of other plants, workers at Kokomo Casting have not had a new local labor agreement for years, in this case since 2019. For years, the Local 1166 leaders have ignored workers’ grievances and safety complaints, looked the other way as management violated overtime protections, and brutally exploited lower-paid “second tier” workers and temporary “Supplemental Employees.”

On September 6, under the instructions of the UAW International, Local 1166 officials gave local management a three-day letter of intent to cancel the local contract and all extension agreements. The strike

was then called, with officials saying they were demanding management fix broken heating and cooling systems, repair equipment to “secure production in house,” enforce overtime language and attain paid uniforms for workers performing particularly dirty jobs.

The strike was called on a weekend when there was no production scheduled. The UAW gave management ample notice to rush completed transmissions out the door before the strike deadline. On social media, workers noted that many of Stellantis’ other plants were already on partial production schedules due to shortages of microchips and other supply chain problems. At the same time, local UAW officials specifically instructed 5,000 UAW Local 685 members at the neighboring Kokomo Transmission plants not to show up on the casting plant picket lines, absurdly claiming they could not do so because they worked for the same company!

The one-page “highlights” sheet handed out to workers was nothing more than a list of worthless promises the UAW said management made to address overtime issues, broken equipment and conditions on the shop floor. “Management committed” to “incrementally repairing or remodeling every restroom, locker room and shower,” to “provide adequate Unit 2 janitorial coverage to keep the entire plant and the basement in a clean and acceptable condition,” to “consider union input on plant layout and shops,” etc. At the bottom there were also promises to “improve air quality” and “provide tempered air for all areas of the plant.” Such commitments, however, are not worth paper they are written on—if they are written down anywhere at all.

A Kokomo Transmission worker who spoke to the WSWS said, “I have a friend over at casting that went

to the rollout meeting today and said they told her there were dates in the actual language. I'd be wary of that myself. Sounds like the same commitments they made in the national contract that still haven't been fixed."

Pointing to the agreement, she said, "These highlights are pretty vague. I would assume they aren't going to give all the info in these short meetings. Everyone really needs to ask questions." Last year, she said, UAW Local 685 officials pushed through a similar deal at her plant by deliberately withholding important details. "Things were left out at our call out meeting that should've been brought up. We were just told the wrong things by [UAW Local 685 President Matt] Jarvis. They don't give you enough time to read the whole contract before throwing a vote out there. They wound up getting the votes to pass it. In my opinion, we could've gotten better had we held out a little longer."

After the deal was announced, UAW President Ray Curry declared, "This tentative agreement is a testament to UAW solidarity. Their working conditions will greatly improve, and they have given us all inspiration to fight for justice and respect in our workplaces." UAW Region 2B Director Wayne Blanchard added, "The auto companies must know that our members will not be sacrificed with cost-cutting efforts as they transition the auto industry."

International UAW Representative Shawn Fain, who is leading the loyal opposition to Curry in the UAW presidential elections, added, "I have 100% confidence our local leadership and membership standing United will get the result the membership desires!!" Fain, who was a longtime official in Local 1166, admitted that local negotiators had gotten "commitments" from management for tempered air, roof repairs and other improvements as far back as 1999 but these had never been "honored by the company."

Fain himself bears a good deal of responsibility for conditions at the casting plant, conditions that one former Kokomo Casting worker posting on Facebook described as "absolute hell." In 2018, a Kokomo Casting worker was critically injured when a die fell on top of him. Rather than expose the unsafe conditions at the plant, the UAW covered up information about the tragedy.

The UAW bureaucracy is facing a rising tide of opposition from workers. As one temporary worker at

Toledo Jeep said: "All the plants should be out. Our local agreement expired in 2019 and the local is not even negotiating a new one. We're going into a contract next year and things are going to get worse, not better. They are going to be asking for more concessions and they are going to close plants. If we don't do something about this, it is not going to be just SEs who are going to lose their jobs, it will be full-time, seniority, everybody."

The UAW apparatus is keenly aware of the growing support for Will Lehman, a rank-and-file Mack Trucks worker and a socialist, who is running for president in the first-ever vote by the union membership. Curry & Co. called the "Hollywood strike" in Kokomo to gain some credibility but such maneuvers will only deepen the hatred of the rank and file for them.

"What is needed is not phony strikes but real struggles that stop the flow of profits to the companies," Will Lehman told the WSWS. "This will not be done by the UAW apparatus, which has spent years selling out the members. It has to be done by workers ourselves. I am running for UAW president to build a powerful rank-and-file movement that will transfer power from the corrupt UAW bureaucrats to the worker on the shop floor. In every factory we have to build rank-and-file committees, and these committees have to communicate with each other, build up real solidarity among workers and prepare common action to abolish tiers, roll over temporary workers, win good wages and COLA protection, and fight for the retirees.

"Everywhere there is a will to fight," Lehman continued, "What we need is to organize. And to fight global corporations like Stellantis, we have to organize across national borders by building the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees."

*The WSWS has endorsed Lehman's campaign. For more information, visit [WillforUAWpresident.org](http://WillforUAWpresident.org).*



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