

Will Lehman sues UAW and Monitor in federal court to guarantee workers' right to vote in election

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Read the full lawsuit filed by Will Lehman

On Thursday, rank-and-file UAW presidential candidate Will Lehman sued the United Auto Workers (UAW) and the court-appointed Monitor to extend the deadline to vote in the first-ever direct elections for UAW leadership and force action that will actually notify the membership that an election is taking place.

The lawsuit, *Lehman v. UAW*, was filed in federal court in Michigan. It defends the right of all rank-and-file members to cast a vote in an election that is a genuine and democratic expression of the will of the membership.

The Monitor has given today (November 18) as the deadline for mailing ballots to ensure that they are received in time to be counted. However, the US Postal Service has reported receiving ballots from only 9 percent of the membership so far. Many workers are reporting that they have not received ballots and that workers at their workplaces do not know an election is taking place.

“This lawsuit is about protecting the rights of the entire membership,” Will Lehman told the *World Socialist Web Site*. “The leadership of the UAW has had unchecked power, free from the say of the dues paying workers, since long before I was even born. They aren’t telling workers about the election because they don’t want us to have a real chance to kick them out.

“Putting the UAW leadership in charge of defending the rights of workers is the reason turnout sits at 9 percent. Their goal was never to give workers a say. Their only concern is protecting their positions at any cost. The voice of the workers needs to be heard.”

Lehman’s legal filing reads, “Without emergency

intervention by this Court, the election that is currently taking place will fall far short of these basic guarantees. The UAW and the Monitor have failed to provide anything resembling adequate notice to hundreds of thousands of rank-and-file UAW members, who are not accustomed to direct elections and would not ordinarily expect to receive ballots.”

It includes statements from dozens of workers who reported not receiving ballots and extreme difficulty in requesting and receiving one from the court-appointed Monitor.

Reporting on a discussion with Lehman following the filing of the lawsuit, the *Detroit News* wrote that Lehman “pointed to conversations he’s had with members heading to and from work about being unaware the election is ongoing and to messages he’s received about not receiving a ballot. Not everyone is receiving emails about it, as well, he added, observing that messages he received himself have gone to the spam folder.”

The *Detroit News* then linked to a video of Will Lehman’s debate with Ray Curry, Shawn Fain and other candidates. “A virtual forum held with presidential candidates received fewer than 20,000 views on YouTube” and “some members may have misidentified a ballot for mailers sent by the UAW for the midterm elections.”

The *Times of Northwest Indiana*, a publication with a wide readership in the industrial Gary region, quoted Lehman’s legal filing.

“This is the first direct election in the history of the UAW,” Lehman’s attorneys argued in the lawsuit. “The membership has no past pattern and practice of directly electing its leadership. Direct elections are only

taking place because the UAW's recent leadership was convicted en masse for systematically violating the rights of its members by converting union funds and accepting bribes from the corporations. Under the circumstances, the refusal to conduct a free and fair election is no accident, but reflects the refusal of the entrenched leadership of the UAW to allow itself to be voted out—a state of affairs that the LMDRA was specifically passed to authorize federal courts to remedy.”

The *Times* then concludes the article, “A UAW spokesperson did not respond to requests for comment.”

Supporters of Will Lehman went to the Stellantis (Chrysler) Warren Truck Assembly plant Thursday afternoon to inform workers about Lehman's lawsuit against the UAW and the federal monitor.

Many workers expressed their support for the legal action demanding that members have an additional month to vote. “Yeah, I support the lawsuit,” one worker said. “A lot of workers are not getting their ballots, and some stewards are telling TPs they don't have the right to vote. I got my ballot, and I'm voting tonight.

“That's ridiculous,” the worker said when the Lehman supporter told him the monitor had received ballots from less than 10 percent of the eligible voters so far. “That's less than the referendum for the one member, one vote decision. It will be in the UAW leaders' favor if they can keep the election hush-hush and people in the dark. The only reason so many people in my plant know about the election is because you guys have been out here regularly since the summertime.”

Another worker commenting on Will's lawsuit said, “It's completely legit. You got to do whatever it takes to get ballots out.” Another worker added, “I know a lot of people who don't even know about the election. Notices should be all over the plant.”

A young worker said, “I called the number to get the ballot and they said they aren't giving them out anymore. We all should have the right to choose. I called for myself and my dad who retired from here after 35 years,” she said, noting that neither one of them had ballots.

Commenting on Lehman's demand that workers have an additional 30 days to get their ballots and vote, she

said, “It should be. It's so soon, right after the election for the government. The [UAW] election kind of got swept in, and, of course, with everything that was mailed to us, for voting, for the governor and all that, I'm not going to lie, people probably made a mistake and threw out the ballot because it looks like just the regular jargon and propaganda.

“I didn't know until a little more than a week ago, it came from a text message, from a co-worker of mine to come down to the local for the strike vote, not necessarily for the vote for the UAW International. I need a ballot. I don't know if I threw it out with all the other election stuff. I sent out a message to everyone in my team. Make sure if you have this at home, fill it out and send it in. This is for our future. You really have to be cognizant about this.”

Another worker, commenting on the lawsuit said, “I agree with it all day long. It's everybody's God-given right to cast their vote and not have anyone else interrupting their ballot from being received and being able to send it in. So, if a lawsuit is necessary to have our right to vote enforced, then I'm all for it. 100%”

Workers have until **today, Friday, November 18**, to postmark their ballots to ensure their vote will count in the UAW election. Do not count on the courts for justice! Send your ballot today and contact WillforUAWpresident@gmail.com if you have not received a ballot or if you know workers who have not received ballots.



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