

Will Lehman files lawsuit to oppose anti-democratic vote suppression by UAW apparatus

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On Thursday, United Auto Workers presidential candidate Will Lehman, a socialist and rank-and-file worker at Mack Trucks, filed a lawsuit in the US District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan demanding an extension of the deadline for workers to submit a ballot in elections for the UAW leadership.

The case, *Lehman v. The UAW*, has been assigned to Judge David M. Lawson, who is responsible for overseeing the UAW and the court-directed Monitorship of the union. It will be heard this coming Tuesday, November 22.

The lawsuit is a response to the anti-democratic manner in which the entire election has been conducted. The first-ever direct elections were only held because of a referendum ordered after the massive corruption scandal that engulfed the leadership of the UAW. UAW President Ray Curry and the Solidarity House apparatus opposed direct elections, but the membership voted overwhelmingly in favor, by 63.7 percent.

Having been forced to accept direct elections, the Solidarity House apparatus has conducted it in a manner designed to exclude participation by the overwhelming majority of rank-and-file workers. It has sought to confine the vote largely to the people who control and staff the massive UAW bureaucracy.

For this reason, as the lawsuit documents, the membership has not been properly informed that an election is even taking place. Many workers have not received ballots and have had to endure a protracted and often unsuccessful procedure to obtain one. In other cases, individuals connected to the bureaucracy received multiple ballots and, according to one report, members of management received ballots. The UAW

deliberately refused to develop accurate mailing lists for workers to receive emails about the elections and ballots.

UAW officials spread lies about temporary part-time workers not being able to vote and sought to illegally intimidate workers from speaking with candidates outside of factories. The Monitor, for its part, has relied entirely on the entrenched leadership of the UAW to inform workers and provide addresses for ballots to be sent, even though it determined that the Curry Team violated federal law by using union resources to campaign.

The clearest evidence of voter suppression is the turnout. Friday, November 18, was the deadline given by the Monitor for mailing ballots to ensure that they are counted. However, *only 9 percent of the membership has so far cast a vote*—95,943 out of more than one million UAW members and retirees, as of Thursday, November 17.

The campaign of Will Lehman went to court to stop this fraudulent process.

As the lawsuit states, “The UAW has the resources and the means to provide the necessary notice but deliberately and obstinately refuses to do so. As a result, only a demonstrably narrow sliver of UAW members are participating in the election... Even more troubling is the fact that, as Lehman has demonstrated in detail to the Monitor, a substantial number of workers who are aware of the election have been unable to participate because they have not been able to obtain a ballot in time to vote, in many cases despite protracted and diligent efforts.”

The lawsuit also includes statements from dozens of workers reporting that they were not informed about the

election, did not receive ballots, were not able to obtain a ballot despite repeated requests to the Monitor, were told that temporary part-time workers (TPTs) cannot vote, and have had their basic democratic rights violated. Many noted that the only information they have received has come from the Will Lehman campaign.

“The Curry team are trying to rig or steal the election,” one worker at Mack Assembly in Detroit stated in the lawsuit. “There are no notices in the plant about the election. The UAW was not telling anyone they could vote. I didn’t know about the election until I met the Will Lehman campaign.” Another worker at Stellantis’ Warren Truck Assembly Plant wrote, “It’s crazy how this election is so hush-hush. If we didn’t see it on your flyer (Will Lehman) a lot of us wouldn’t know there is an election going on.”

The lawsuit argues compellingly that the only way to rectify the situation and ensure a fair and democratic election is to extend the voting period. “To ensure Lehman and the entire UAW membership’s right to participate in a fair election that expresses the genuine views of the membership as a whole, the election must be delayed by 30 days to ensure all eligible members receive ballots and have the chance to cast them,” it states. “This Court must also require Defendants take action reasonably aimed at providing notice of the election as well as ballots to the *entire membership*.”

The basic argument is fundamental. An election is meaningless if workers are not able to exercise their right to vote. An election that is controlled and manipulated by the apparatus to suppress the vote by a leadership that has a vested interest in reducing turnout is not legitimate.

The campaign of Will Lehman has exposed the vast social chasm between rank-and-file workers and the pro-corporate trade union bureaucracy, consisting of thousands of highly-paid functionaries. The bureaucracy’s effort to suppress the vote is an extension of its role as a police force over the working class, through which Corporate America exercises its dictatorship over the working class.

On the other hand, Lehman’s fight to ensure the most basic democratic right, the right to vote, is an extension and expression of the campaign’s fight to mobilize workers against the apparatus and create genuinely democratic organizations, rank-and-file committees,

through which they can unify and fight for their interests.

The outcome of Lehman’s lawsuit will be determined early this Tuesday. The *World Socialist Web Site* urges our readers to share and distribute the report on the lawsuit as well as the video statement from Lehman’s attorney. Make this lawsuit as broadly known as possible among auto workers and every section of the working class!



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