

Autoworkers voice support for lawsuit by UAW presidential candidate Will Lehman to defend right to vote

Our reporter
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The federal lawsuit filed by rank-and-file Mack Trucks worker Will Lehman to demand an extension of the voting deadline in the first ever United Auto Workers direct election of national officers is winning broad support from autoworkers. Lehman, a candidate for UAW president, filed the lawsuit to oppose attempts by the UAW apparatus to suppress the vote and to ensure that every UAW member secures the right to cast a ballot.

As the Friday, November 18 voting deadline passed, thousands of autoworkers were still unable to vote due to widespread problems with receiving ballots and under conditions where broad sections of the UAW membership are still unaware of the election because the union apparatus has done nothing to inform them. According to the most recent count posted by the court-appointed UAW monitor, on November 17, only 95,943 ballots had been returned out of more than one million UAW active workers and retirees eligible to vote, less than a 10 percent participation rate.

The low vote totals are in contrast to the pent-up anger of rank-and-file workers over decades of concessions contracts that have devastated jobs, pension, benefits and wages as well as rampant corruption in the UAW apparatus, with two former UAW presidents sentenced to jail terms.

A worker from Stellantis Warren Truck contacted by the WSWS said, "I think they should have made [the election] more accessible."

The worker reacted angrily to the fact that many temporary part-time workers (TPTs) were not informed by the UAW of their right to vote. "If they pay union dues they should be able to vote. Especially when they make up such a large part of the workforce. They

should call them essential workers, because the plant can't run without them.

"They treat temps like they are disposable. They're the only ones who come to work every day."

Responding to the deaths at Warren Truck from COVID, including the death of paint shop worker Catherine Pace, the worker said, "Working here so much, the blinders come off. Out of all the plants for Chrysler we had the most deaths from COVID." Adding it was time for workers to take a stand against these conditions, the worker concluded, "I would rather die fighting for equality and freedom, rather than do nothing."

Another Warren Truck said "I didn't know there was an election until this Wednesday when a coworker asked me if I'd voted. Thing is, I like to be informed about who's running and what they stand for, so I can know who to cast my vote for. In my lifetime, I've not voted in only one election. I feel bad. Had I known about it, I would have done differently."

A worker from Mack Trucks in Macungie, Pennsylvania had this to say about how the election was being run: "Poorly, very poorly. It's rigged, from what I see. If not everyone is receiving a ballot or even knowing about the election then it isn't a true vote."

He said the decision to sue to ensure workers received adequate time and ballots was a "good thing. Only thing is, who knows how long this will be drawn out. Will doesn't have people in Washington like Curry does from his years there. It would be interesting to see how the legal system does with this."

A temporary worker at the Stellantis Detroit Manufacturing Complex-Mack (DMCA), when learning of the lawsuit, said, "I can definitely get

behind everyone having the right to vote.

“I haven’t gotten my ballot and I have been checking my mail every day. There are at least two or three other people that I know of who haven’t gotten theirs. I was looking forward to voting too.

“I found out about the election from the Will Lehman campaign, not the union. That doesn’t make sense.

“I saw Will’s videos. They were really informative.

“I actually inquired about getting a ballot twice from the UAW. They said they would send one out right away: but they never did anything about it.

“It’s crazy that only 95,000 people have voted out of 1 million. It would only make sense for the UAW to tell people about it.

“The majority of TPTs are in the dark and feeling frustrated. All they said there was a vote coming, but they said anything about it or if we could vote or how we go about voting. We never found out anything.

“My father retired from Chrysler. I don’t like saying anything bad about the union, but what are we supposed to do?

“I have to work two jobs. My rent is \$1,000, plus utilities and I have to drive back and forth to work.”

A member of the Ford Chicago Assembly Plant Rank-and-File Election Committee said, “With people getting multiple ballots, people not getting ballots, and a huge majority not knowing there’s an election and in our first real vote in the history of the UAW, it sure seems like we’re being suppressed here. I wish Will luck; he’s the only one putting up a real fight. It takes a lot to stand up to a huge group of people like that. That’s one of the reasons why I’m behind him. [Incumbent UAW President Ray Curry] is a joke. He tried to get retirees not to be able to vote and he’s out there campaigning to get the retiree vote. You couldn’t make it up”

A Stellantis Belvidere Assembly Plant worker said, “This election is obviously not done correctly. I support Will’s lawsuit, definitely. It’s crazy. It’s obviously something corrupt going on. There’s no way only 10 percent of the union members have turned out for a vote. It proves that it’s corrupt. I just can’t see that. Will needs all the support that he can get for this. I’ll let the people at Belvidere know about this.”

A worker from Ford Kansas City Assembly Plant also voiced support: “I say what he’s doing is good. They must fear that he might possibly win. That’s the reason

I’ve been notifying the people that there’s an election going on and I hope he can get it delayed for the 30 days so all the members can be notified about an election, because this is the first time we’ve been able to do this.”



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