"We have to defend our right to a fair election"

Workers express outrage after federal judge rejects Will Lehman's request for 30-day extension of UAW ballot deadline

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For more information on the campaign of Will Lehman for UAW president, visit WillforUAWPresident.org.

US District Court Judge David Lawson issued a ruling on Wednesday dismissing a lawsuit brought by United Auto Workers presidential candidate Will Lehman to request a one-month extension of UAW election deadlines. The Mack Trucks worker had filed the lawsuit after it became apparent that thousands of workers either had not been informed of the election or had never received ballots.

As of Friday afternoon, the UAW monitor's website reported that just 101,275 ballots had been received out of close to one million eligible UAW active workers and retirees. The deadline for putting ballots to be received in the mail is November 28, this coming Monday, and the tabulation of the vote starts next week.

Judge Lawson's decision was a judicial travesty that ran roughshod over the rights of UAW members to vote. While he noted the fact that barely 10 percent of UAW members eligible to vote had cast ballots, he went on to rule against Lehman's suit on the narrowest technical grounds, claiming that since Lehman had received a ballot, he had no standing to file the lawsuit. Instead, he stated that Lehman would have to wait until the election was over and argue before the US Department of Labor, headed by Biden appointee Marty Walsh.

A worker from Flint, Michigan who attended the hearing in federal court in Detroit reacted to the decision: "I am very outraged by what has occurred," she said. "Will went into court to protect the right of every rank and file worker to have the right to vote in a *meaningful* election."

Lehman's lawyer had explained that this requires that all the workers be informed about the election, be able to obtain a ballot and have the ability to cast a vote. But those conditions had not been met.

"Therefore", she added, "Will deserved to win the case on every count. For the workers, it was a slap in the face that the judge decided to rule against him. It absolutely shows that no one cares about the workers, except the workers. That is exactly the reason why we need to stand together and fight for rank-and-file committees, now more then ever."

A UAW member in North Carolina said, "Will Lehman has given voice to sentiments that many people all over the country and around the world have been seeing and feeling for a long time. His rank-and-file movement has given us a platform to make our voices heard.

"Judge Lawson and Biden's secretary of labor, Marty Walsh, have sided with the corrupt UAW apparatus, and taking away our most basic right, the principle of one man one vote. They trampled on the democratic tradition of this country, going back to the Declaration of Independence. The judge might as well have said that he was siding with the divine right of the King of England.

"I side with Will Lehman and the rank-and-file movement that stands on the principle of equality of workers everywhere. We have to defend our right to a fair election. The power is in the hands of the rank-and-

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file. We must spread the word and build the committees to be able to use it."

A General Motors worker at the Flint Truck plant said, "I believe the reason the UAW apparatus failed to inform us is because this election presents a challenge to them, to their very existence. The low voter turnout is not due to workers' apathy, but due to the conspiratorial actions of the bureaucracy.

"This ruling must be made known to all workers!"

Another Flint GM Truck worker with six years seniority said, "A very blatant deceit has taken place by the federal judge. The working class must wake up and bind together to overthrow the bureaucracy. If we don't act now, they will take everything our past and original UAW brothers and sisters put into place."

A member of the Mack Assembly Rank-and-File Committee in Detroit said, "If only 10 percent voted, what happened to the rest of the ballots? It seems they don't care about the 90 percent who didn't turn in ballots. Now that every UAW member has the right to vote, that is an issue. They should have questioned it. Why don't they don't see a problem with that? The judge and the monitor just want to keep things as they are."

A worker at Jefferson North Assembly Plant in Detroit said, "It is basically unfair, there were a great deal of members that didn't get an opportunity to vote because of not getting a ballot. Everyone should be concerned; it's not ok. It sends a message that they can keep being corrupt."

The judge's ruling quashing the lawsuit came as a strike by University by 48,000 California academic workers, members of the UAW, continues. Rank-and-file anger against local UAW officials erupted this week when strikers learned that negotiators had dropped the demand for cost of living adjustments to be added to wage increases. Many strikers have told campaigners for Will Lehman that they had heard nothing about the election from the UAW.

As the court case was playing out in Detroit, Lehman addressed groups of UC workers during several live streamed discussions. He stressed the need for academic workers to build rank-and-file committees independent of the union apparatus to fight for their demands.

A striking University of California teaching assistant told the *World Socialist Web Site* he had been outraged by the judge's ruling, "I mean it is complete BS; every member of the union is affected and should have standing, not to mention that this sidesteps the issue at hand of an unfair election regardless of whether or not he [Will Lehman] has standing."

Another Berkeley striker, Taylor, said, "It's very odd to me that there was no announcement about a UAW leadership election. I'm new to being in a union as of a few months ago, and the only way I found out about it was from one other student and then through the Will Lehman campaign.

"Since this election is not long after the midterm elections, I can't help but compare how much mail and news coverage and ballot tracking communications I received about that, and there was nothing I received from the union about the election except my ballot. I actually recycled my first one because I thought it was the vote to authorize the strike, which I did online. I'm stunned by the silence and lack of communication from the UAW!"

A member of UAW Local 600 at the Ford Dearborn truck plant outside Detroit said of the decision to throw out the lawsuit, "That was a textbook example of the political set up in our country. As a rank-and file-worker if you've got somebody dead to rights, there is always a back door for the rich and powerful. Will Lehman's case was thrown out due to a technicality. When he commented that the turnout was very low, the judge was admitting that Will Lehman had a valid claim. Then he turned around and said that Will would have to wait until the election was over and appeal to the Labor Department, which was already siding with the UAW against the workers."

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