

Stellantis Warren Truck workers voice support for Will Lehman's call for all candidates to be included in UAW election runoff

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Many workers at the Stellantis Warren Truck Assembly Plant in suburban Detroit voiced strong support for the call by Mack Trucks worker Will Lehman for the United Auto Workers runoff election in January to include the names of all five presidential candidates on the ballot and to take measures to ensure every worker has the right to vote.

Lehman, a socialist, ran for president in the first UAW direct election of officers, which concluded on November 28. He won nearly 5 percent of the vote in an election marred by gross irregularities that had the result of suppressing the vote. Only about 9 percent of 1.1 million eligible UAW active and retired workers cast ballots for the top officers.

The union has announced there will be a runoff between incumbent UAW President Ray Curry and longtime bureaucrat Shawn Fain. Lehman as well as two other candidates, Mark "Gibby" Gibson and Brian Keller, will be excluded. Last month Lehman went to court to obtain an injunction extending the voting for another four weeks, but his lawsuit was rejected by a federal judge.

At Warren Truck, campaign team members distributed copies of a statement issued December 4 by Lehman that called on workers to mobilize independently of the UAW bureaucracy and the court-appointed UAW Monitor to defend their right to an open and fair election. "The rank and file must fight for its rights in order to win them. If you agree with my demand for all candidates to be put back on the ballot and that the membership be truly informed, make your voice heard! Talk to your coworkers and encourage them to support this demand.

"Form rank-and-file election committees in your workplace to demand that every worker has the right to

vote in a meaningful election that expresses the genuine will of the membership."

Many Warren Truck workers stopped to talk to supporters of Will Lehman. A TPT (temporary part-time) worker who had voted for Will said, "I saw all the candidates on the debate, and he seemed like the right one for me. I don't like the other guys. From what I heard, I think he is a great candidate."

Asked about the runoff between Fain and Curry, the worker said, "It's horrible. If they win, we will be screwed. I am a TPT. I came in every day for a year, and I've never been late and never called off. I just do my work and leave. It's BS what goes on in here.

"The union reps were actually telling the TPTs if they got any ballots, they should throw them out, they cannot vote. I actually heard them saying that.

"I guarantee a lot of TPTs would have voted for Will if they could, but they were told they couldn't vote. They didn't want the TPTs to vote. Now they are shipping a lot of TPTs over to other plants like SHAP (Sterling Heights Assembly Plant) and the Mack plant."

Last month Stellantis announced the elimination of the third shift at Warren Truck. This was accompanied by threats that the plant would not receive a new product assignment, putting it on the road to closure if absenteeism and quality issues were not resolved. The UAW refused to oppose this threat, instead siding with management.

The TPT worker continued, "They should re-run the election, and everyone should be able to vote. At first, I didn't know that TPTs could vote until I contacted Will and asked if TPTs were allowed to vote. He said 'yes.' So, I think there should be an extension. This is rigged."

Referring to the lawsuit Will filed against the UAW seeking an extension in the voting deadline, the worker said, “I am glad he filed the lawsuit. He’s fighting for himself. He is also fighting for the workers. I don’t think what happened is right. We need to get the bad out.”

Many workers told supporters of Will Lehman they had never received ballots and never received any information from the UAW about the election. In a letter, published in the *Detroit News* last week, Lehman wrote, “Despite its unprecedented character, the way the election is being carried out is a travesty. Out of 1 million UAW members (workers and retirees), 900,000 (90 percent) have not voted. This is not because workers are apathetic, but because most workers don’t even know that there is an election. UAW leadership has done as little as possible to inform workers of their rights and ensure that they can vote.”

“It would be good to have a run-off with all the candidates,” a Warren Truck worker with 30 years said. “It was not a fair process. We need a change. I voted for Will because we are going to get the same old crap with Curry and Fain. The ruling the judge made against Will’s lawsuit was BS. This was a rigged election.

“We need COLA and to get rid of these tiers. The fact that some workers have to get second jobs in another auto plant to make ends meet is horrendous. It just shows how much we’ve lost. It’s gone way beyond the UAW just being in bed with management. This used to be a dream job; it meant security for your family. Now it takes two jobs to survive.”

Another Warren Truck worker told campaigners, “They didn’t talk about any of this in the building. They keep us in the dark about everything. I didn’t even get a ballot. I think they should extend the voting.”

Another worker said, “Will did what he should do to file that lawsuit. There was very poor communication if only 10 percent voted. Everyone should be able to vote.”

A veteran worker, who said he had voted for Will, said, “I am in favor of a rerun. Out of half million retirees they got so few ballots back? It’s unbelievable.

“I am tired of give and take. There will be no more giving. We have to get everyone to stick together next year and strike. We have nothing to lose.”

A young worker with eight years at the plant added, “I never got a ballot and didn’t even know an election was going on. No one on my team knew anything about it either. If 1,000 workers voted at our plant (out of 5,200) that was mostly the older people. The TPTs and SEs didn’t vote. I agree with having a runoff with all the

candidates and making sure this time that everyone knows there is an election.”

“We should have a second vote with all the candidates,” another young worker said. “They didn’t do much advertising to let us know about the elections. The conditions and wages are really bad here. I’ve been thinking about taking on another job.”

“I never got a ballot, even after I requested one from the local,” another worker said. “I agree 100 percent we should have another election with all the candidates. I don’t understand why everyone didn’t get a ballot. It means we don’t have real representation. Everyone is underpaid, and we need someone to fight for us.”

The worker also said he was following the struggle of the railroad workers and said the decision by Congress and the Biden administration to impose a contract, which workers had previously voted down, “was an attack on their freedom.”

“It’s crazy that 90 percent of the membership didn’t vote,” another worker said. “How can the two candidates in the runoff claim they have a mandate with numbers like that? All the candidates should be in the runoff. I voted for Will so we could fight for real change.”

Paul, another young worker, said, “TPTs have opinions, and everybody should have the right to vote. The union did not do enough to let people know about the election.”

A veteran worker added, “I voted for Will because those in power aren’t doing anything. What better way is there to change things than to have a candidate who gives workers a voice. How can they say this was a fair election without everybody participating in it and with the number of ballots that were not sent? It makes a lot of sense to have all the candidates in the runoff and to make sure everyone gets a ballot.”



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