

Shawn Fain and Ray Curry debate launches fraudulent UAW runoff election

Shannon Jones
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United Auto Workers President Ray Curry and longtime UAW bureaucrat Shawn Fain took part in an online debate Thursday night timed to coincide with the start of voting in the runoff election for UAW president. The runoff is going forward despite the fact that the UAW Monitor has yet to certify the results of the first round due to the outstanding protest over massive voter suppression on the part of the UAW apparatus filed by Will Lehman, a Mack Trucks worker and presidential candidate himself.

Lehman has demanded that all candidates in the first round be placed on the runoff ballot and that all UAW members be given proper notice and the full opportunity to vote. The excluded candidates are Lehman, Brian Keller, a Stellantis employee, and Mark Gibson, a local president at Detroit Diesel.

The debate was a fiasco, serving to underscore the fraudulent nature of the runoff election that gives workers the “choice” between two handpicked candidates of the UAW apparatus. The lack of legitimacy of both Curry and ostensible challenger Fain overshadowed the debate.

The debate was hardly publicized. There was not even a notice on the UAW website and was viewed live by less than 1,000 attendees. Underscoring the fear of all factions of the UAW apparatus of the rank-and-file membership, commenting was disabled before and during the event.

The debate moderator, former *New York Times* labor reporter Steven Greenhouse, ignored a question submitted by Lehman over the legitimacy of the election’s first round, marked by historic low voter turnout. Both candidates completely evaded the question of voter suppression, expressed in the fact that less than 10 percent of eligible UAW members voted.

Nonetheless, the question of voter suppression was the elephant in the room that could not be ignored. For his part, Fain pointed to the fact that 62 percent did not vote for Curry in the first round, while Curry replied by noting that he received 600 more votes than Fain, hardly a

ringing endorsement. What neither mentioned is the fact that each candidate received the vote of less than 4 percent of the eligible UAW members.

Both bureaucrats correctly pointed out that their opponent was a longtime supporter of the corrupt UAW apparatus that has overseen betrayal after betrayal and the devastating decline in the living standards of autoworkers, once the highest paid industrial workers in America.

Curry oozed bureaucratic complacency and self-satisfaction, while Fain was the picture of blandness and conformity.

An air of unreality pervaded the debate. Both men attempted to present themselves as reformers, but neither could document a single instance where he actually opposed the UAW apparatus. Fain noted that Curry had been handpicked by Gary Jones for the position of secretary treasurer. Soon afterwards Jones was indicted and convicted for stealing UAW funds.

Curry pointed out that Fain had been an employee at the Chrysler National Training Center, which had prominently figured in the UAW corruption scandal, with union staff members pocketing illegal payouts from company executives aimed at keeping them “fat, dumb and happy.”

Both candidates avoided making any specific pledges or policy proposals. Fain declared, “It’s time we put corporate America on notice that our members deserve their fair share, and we’re coming for it.” Curry for his part declared, “I have been leading the charge since leaving the military, bringing vision, integrity, wealth of experience.” This type of meaningless corporate-speak—always patronizing in its nationalist tone—is commonplace in elections for public office.

Curry’s absurd claim that there is “no ongoing corruption” in the UAW was belied by the conviction last year of the former financial secretary of Local 412 for embezzling \$2.1 million in union funds, including during

the period when Curry was in charge of union finances as secretary treasurer. In fact, the UAW Monitor released a report last summer that Ray Curry and the UAW International Executive Board had obstructed investigations into ongoing criminal activities, including embezzlement.

When asked about their stand on the question of a 30-hour workweek at 40-hours pay, both Curry and Fain simply ignored the question. They both likewise evaded commenting on the horrific sexual abuse scandal at Ford Chicago Assembly and Chicago Stamping that involved harassment of female workers by both management and local UAW officials.

Citing supposed “wins” under his administration, Curry pointed to the strike settlement at John Deere in 2021 without mentioning that workers there had voted down several sellout contracts negotiated by the UAW.

In response to a question about the “idling” (closure) next month of the Stellantis Belvidere Assembly Plant, impacting more than 1,300 workers, Fain stated that he would “take action” without detailing any specific policy or proposal. Curry boasted that he had discussed the fate of Belvidere with Stellantis officials and President Biden on the floor of the international auto show in Detroit last September, prior to Stellantis’ announcement of the closure.

After the debate, the *Detroit News* and *Detroit Free Press* featured short articles with almost identical headlines, both absurdly claiming the two candidates offered “competing visions.”

Responding to the refusal of both candidates to address the question of voter suppression, a worker at Stellantis Warren Truck Plant outside Detroit said, “There is no way in the world you can say, with the first time in history to elect our leader, we just turned away. You would have to be stupid to believe that. They took no accountability for it last night. It was more about them and less about the people.”

Adding, “You could see how tight-lipped they got with the questions. They danced around a lot of it. They didn’t speak about the tier system, anything that immediately matters to us. It came out that last year they passed a motion to give \$20,000 early retirement payment to themselves. How can you do that when people are on strike? That is robbery. They should be taken to jail. Anybody who has a lick of common sense can see what happened. It was a control thing.”

Will Lehman issued the following statement in response to the debate:

There is a reason the Monitor and the UAW excluded me and other independent candidates from this debate: Everyone decided that the rank and file would have no say whatsoever in the debate in this run-off. First of all, this is an illegitimate election because neither Fain nor Curry could win 40,000 votes from 1.1 million members.

The debate between Curry and Fain was a beauty pageant between the two ugly representatives of the UAW bureaucracy. That’s what the Monitor and the UAW wanted from Day One, which is why they are proceeding to a run-off despite 9 percent turnout in the first round. Ray Curry said “everyone’s got the right to vote” in the first round, and neither Fain nor *New York Times* reporter Steven Greenhouse questioned him. The Monitor still hasn’t even responded to my formal protest, which was the product of evidence submitted by over 100 UAW members from more than 50 locals.

My campaign is not over. Contracts representing hundreds of thousands of UAW members are expiring this year, and the struggle by 48,000 University of California workers shows we are ready to fight. To defend our economic interests as a class, we must defend our democratic rights, which is why I am calling for the formation of rank-and-file committees to demand a new election in which the entire membership is actually informed that an election is taking place and to prepare for the struggles ahead.



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