

GM, Stellantis workers support Will Lehman lawsuit

Our reporters
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On July 3, Will Lehman, a Mack Trucks worker and a socialist candidate for United Auto Workers president, sued the Biden administration's Department of Labor, demanding that the UAW national officers' election be rerun with the names of all candidates on the ballot due to massive voter disenfranchisement by the bureaucracy.

Lehman's lawsuit in federal court in the Eastern District of Michigan was in response to Labor Department's denial of his challenge over the conduct of the election. US Labor Department officials provided no explanation for the decision and ignored the mountain of evidence Lehman presented detailing how the UAW took no serious measures to publicize the election or update mailing addresses. As a result, nearly one million of the 1.1 million eligible voters did not cast ballots, in the lowest turnout in a union election in history.

Will Lehman posted a video Wednesday where he discusses the issues in the lawsuit with attorney Eric Lee. UAW members were essentially stripped of their right to vote and choose the union leadership on the eve of a decisive contract battle with the automakers. Instead, Shawn Fain, a long-time UAW International bureaucrat was installed with the votes of about 3 percent of the rank and file and the rigged election was sanctioned by the court-appointed UAW Monitor, the pro-company law firms the monitor employed, and the Biden administration. Their aim was to put a trusted bureaucrat in place to impose another pro-company contract on 150,000 GM, Ford and Stellantis workers when their contracts expire in mid-September.

Workers are heading into a direct collision with the UAW bureaucracy and the Biden administration. As important as the lawsuit is, the main issue remains, as Lehman stressed all during his campaign, the building of workers' power on the shop floor. This means the continuation and deepening of the fight to build rank-and-file committees to transfer power from the UAW

bureaucracy to the workers.

Members of the Autoworker Rank-and-File Network spoke to the WSWs about the significance of Lehman's lawsuit.

A member of the GM Flint Assembly Worker Rank-and-File Committee said, "With the first election there was nothing, no information from the union regarding ballots. Just complete silence with nothing being said.

"For the run-off election between Curry and Fain, the membership at our plant was bombarded with fliers, signs outside and inside GM property, addressed personal mail almost everyday leading up to the run-off election. This proved that the UAW could have informed us for the first round, but did not.

"At the GM Flint plant, the bureaucracy had the audacity to blame the workers for the low turnout when hardly anyone got a ballot. The results of the lawsuits filed in federal court with valid documentation and facts were merely pushed aside and ignored with no justified reasons. It only makes sense that we do this, that we support Will's lawsuit against the Biden administration.

"The election was solely held to convince workers that the past corruption in the UAW would be ended! They embezzled and spent our dues money on anything from gambling and golf outings to expensive food and alcohol. Even worse has been their suppression of any struggle by workers to correct unfavorable conditions, and even stating that workers and the companies have the same goals and ideas."

She referred to the September 22, 2022 debate between Lehman, incumbent president Ray Curry, Fain and other UAW candidates. "The debate had a huge impact on me. Will wanted to get rid of the UAW apparatus and put the workers in control. Will exposed the UAW bureaucrats—both Curry and Fain. He had a program completely different from all the other candidates as well. If more workers had known about the debate and watched

it, Will would have won even more support. We got zero info that there was a debate. I heard about it through the Will Lehman campaign when he visited our plant.

“The Shawn Fain election is not legitimate! It may be legitimate and a complete success in the eyes of the bureaucracy but as far as the rank-and-file workers go, we barely participated and were kept in the dark. We have no control over our future unless we build and expand rank-and-file committees and stand up amongst ourselves.

“This entire voting charade is just another example of the thousand events they have so far gotten away with. Rank-and-file workers should be in control of the dues money and the strike fund and decide where that money goes. We should be in complete control, especially at this point. There’s more than enough money in the UAW’s accounts to have given the Clarios workers \$1,000 strike pay instead of the \$500 which no one can live on!

“Fain betrayed the Clarios strike, soon after he was ‘elected.’ He even claimed the contract was a victory—a contract voted down twice by the workers, which included a 12-hour shift with no overtime pay. The deception about the UAW election and the nature of Fain goes very deep, but we can stop it by informing workers and exposing the truth.”

Another member of the GM Flint Assembly Rank-and-File Committee said, “Will’s lawsuit is a much needed and big step in our defense as workers. The current Shawn Fain administration is completely illegitimate. There must be a rerun to have a fair election. The whole election was corrupt from beginning to end and we cannot allow the current administration to exist as it is now.

“All throughout the election, the previous UAW leadership under Curry consciously and with purposeful intent committed massive voter fraud by preventing the vast majority of the working and retired rank-and-file UAW membership from voting or even knowing that an election was taking place.

“They didn’t post any notices or make sure everyone even got a ballot to vote. Only after the first round of the election did the UAW leadership decide to let workers know about the runoff between the two candidates the union leaders considered acceptable. They had to make sure a candidate like Will would not be known about, let alone voted in by workers. The conscious and conspiratorial actions of the UAW apparatus should be grounds for rerunning the election.

“Will’s case is clear and shows the record of what actually happened. The judge hearing Will’s first lawsuit

sided with the union’s lawyers, the same lawyers GM uses to combat striking workers, and shut it down on bogus and false grounds of voter apathy. This was disproved by statements sent in by workers showing they did not receive ballots or were not aware of the election. Workers were not apathetic. They were deceived and prevented from voting by the union.”

He continued, “Will’s lawsuit is in all our interests as workers and must be made known. We cannot allow Fain and the rest of the corrupt UAW leaders get away with what they did.”

A member of the Warren Truck Rank-and-File Committee also spoke about the lawsuit. “The companies spent millions to bribe the UAW officials. It wasn’t just cash, it was credit card payments for luxury clothes, trips and golfing vacations. Things haven’t changed. The UAW International is still all for the company, not for the people. We’re the ones suffering.

“I agree with Will’s lawsuit. The Biden administration isn’t doing anything to get rid of the corruption in the unions. I didn’t know anything about the national union elections. But when the local leaders are running, they go out into the parking lots to get your votes. I asked the candidates what they are going to do to roll over the TPTs (temporary part-time workers) to full time? They got choked up and said, ‘It’s not in our hands.’ We don’t have any protection. Why are they taking our dues? If TPTs only get half protection from the union, why aren’t we paying half the dues?

“Workers are getting tired of this. Everybody is hurting with inflation. Our paychecks are not enough. They especially use the TPTs for cheaper labor. Now, the UAW has allowed the company to put our plant on critical status, so they can work us seven days a week, up to 12 hours a day, for the next 90 days.

“If we take the initiative, and prepare to strike whether the UAW apparatus wants it or not, then we’ll have a chance. If we leave it in their hands, they’ll come back with the same contract again and again till they get us to vote for it. That’s what happened at Clarios, and we don’t want it to happen to us.”

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