

“Will Lehman was telling the truth”: Autoworkers hail court victory against sham union election

Our reporters
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Autoworkers, tell us what you think about this week’s court ruling against the UAW bureaucracy and the Department of Labor by filling out the form below. All submissions will be kept anonymous.

Autoworkers across the US are hailing the victory in court this week against the Department of Labor and the United Auto Workers bureaucracy over massive irregularities in the 2022 union elections.

Will Lehman, a socialist autoworker who ran on a platform of abolishing the union bureaucracy, won a ruling in his lawsuit against the arbitrary dismissal of his complaints by a court-appointed monitor overseeing the election and then by the federal government.

In a statement, Lehman said the ruling

... vindicates the fight we have waged to defend the basic democratic rights of over one million rank-and-file members of the UAW. Last year, Biden’s Labor Department dismissed my objections to the illegitimate UAW elections without responding to the merits of my arguments about voter suppression, which led to a 9 percent turnout and the fraudulent election of Shawn Fain.

This is a devastating blow to the UAW bureaucracy, the Biden administration and the court-appointed Monitor, who collectively oversaw the election and worked to suppress voter turnout.

“I believe that Will Lehman and the WSWs are telling the truth,” said a worker at Ford’s Rouge complex in Dearborn, Michigan. “When Fain got elected, they were saying we are all going to walk out together. But when it came time to strike, they only shut down a few parts plants that nobody cares about. If it were not for the *World Socialist Web Site*, we would never know what is going on.”

He continued:

There is so much scamming everywhere in the union. The rank and file needs to understand. We need to get control of the union. That is such a big job. They look after each other in the union [apparatus]. You know they didn’t want [Will Lehman] to win. They want everything to remain the way it is.

Felicia was one of two delegates who nominated Will Lehman for

UAW president at the UAW convention held in July 2022. She is a social worker in UAW Local 2320 in Chicago, Illinois.

She wrote:

I’m ecstatic! I’d like a do-over of the election now! Right will always stand. I have always been a supporter of Will Lehman. He does not give up. He’s a fighter, and that’s why he is a workers’ leader. I am proud I stood up at the convention and nominated him. It was my very first convention. I had the opportunity to speak with him on the first day. I was convinced that he was genuine. He spoke about abolishing the UAW apparatus and transferring power to the rank and file.

He could have won, if all the garbage hadn’t gone on with suppressing the votes, as well as not informing workers about the election. Fain was no competition for Will.

I was just a rank-and-file person at the convention. Things were not right there. Those on the platform had no business being on stage. They were all connected to and part of the corruption. I don’t believe any of them were working on the shop floor.

The monitor and the government are on the side of the UAW apparatus. None of them are concerned about the workers on the shop floor. When I spoke with Will, I felt we were speaking the same language. His message was and still is, to encourage us as workers to speak and fight for the rank and file.

The day before I heard about Will’s victory, I learned that Julian Assange was being freed! I’m so happy! He should never have been jailed for telling the truth.

A Caterpillar worker in Peoria, Illinois, said:

I’m glad to hear that they are going to do an investigation. Because with the numbers as low as we had as far as turnout, you would think it would’ve been an automatic investigation done. To me if you’re confident that you’re the person for the job, why not let the people of the union vote the right way in order to pick the ones they want in leadership? But instead, they try to rig the system.

Lyle Roussey, a retired GM worker who voted for Will Lehman, said:

I was kind of shocked by the judge's ruling. He was pretty stern with the Labor Department. We know the UAW didn't use a good list to get everybody a ballot and that the election was a farce.

The judge said he wanted an investigation or an explanation. That kind of leaves the UAW an off-ramp. The Biden administration will be hard pressed to explain what the UAW did in the election, but they will come up with some explanation to satisfy the judge. I have no faith the judge will change things.

The mailing addresses the UAW used to send the ballots to the membership were way out of date, and they knew that. They knew the ballots weren't going to reach the majority of the membership, especially the new hires and the younger people. That's a tactic they used so Will wouldn't have any more influence.

They were frightened over Will's position. He stood all the way through in his candidacy, saying we have to abolish the apparatus of the UAW and the workers have to take control. That's right. It's obvious that the UAW bureaucracy is strictly in management's favor.

That was shown with the bogus "stand up" strike. If you are going to strike a company and get leverage over them, everybody has to walk. It's not a strike if you only hit a few plants and allow them to keep producing and making profits. They are not going to bend. The UAW started, back in the 1930s in Flint, because they shut the production down. They stopped the profits, and they fought hard. That's the only way that workers in the US and around the world can make any gains. Everybody has to stop working, worldwide. It's not going to happen with these piddly ass strikes. That's a farce.

Now there's a new investigation into corruption. Who was elected? The same people who ran the union before. There was no change with Fain. They have a lot of money available, and they are going to try to swindle it. They are living like rich capitalists, with all kinds of money. They got away with a phony election, and they think they can get away with anything. The Department of Labor is not watching them. The UAW monitor is not watching them. So they think they have a blank check. There has to be a new investigation and another election.

Biden won't do it. He's working with Fain. All that stuff about being the "first president to go on a picket line" was nothing but public relations stuff.

They want to prepare us for another world war. But people are sick of war, especially in light of what is happening to the Palestinians in Gaza and what is happening in Ukraine. The younger people are demonstrating and they are serious, not only in the US but worldwide. If we can carry that on to a demonstration against war in general, that would be great.

Bill, a retiree from GM's Pontiac Truck and Bus plant, which closed in 2009, said:

The monitor's law firm serves General Motors, the UAW serves the Big Three, and then there's Biden. He is not for the working class, he's not a friend of labor. None of them are. FDR [Franklin Delano Roosevelt] was for the workers, or so he presented himself, but here's what the New Deal was really about. In 1917, there was the Russian Revolution, and there was a lot of support for what those workers did. So it was suggested by the labor leaders to FDR and the ruling class if you don't help us out here, you are going to see a revolution in the US. This was in the midst of sit-down strikes in auto and very militant labor struggles.

The UAW tried to make the election look like it was all about the rank and file participating. But it was actually a dog and pony show. Shawn Fain was not elected by the rank and file. It was all smoke and mirrors. Hey, I did get a ballot. But when I called folks to tell them about Will Lehman and then asked: Did you get your ballot? "What ballot?" they replied. Only 4-5 of us got ballots—and that was out of our large circle of Ford, Chrysler and GM retirees.

A member of the GM Flint Workers Rank-and-File Committee said:

The Will Lehman campaign forced the UAW to face and expose their deceitful actions in the last UAW election, which is just a small representation of the hoaxing they pull on the working class every day. Without the campaign, they would have gotten away with no consequences, although there may not be a re-election, as there should be.

By winning in court we are able to provide ample evidence backed by the federal judge that the UAW bureaucracy and Biden's Department of Labor and the monitor are corrupted. This is why it is more important now than ever to form rank-and-file committees to abolish the UAW apparatus before they get away with anything more.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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