

What the UAW's 2024 financial filing says about Fain's "union reform"

Jerry White
2 April 2025

The United Auto Workers and several other major unions filed their 2024 financial reports with the US Department of Labor at the end of March. In 2024, workers saw their living standards devastated by inflation, and thousands of UAW members lost their jobs at the Detroit Three auto companies and other employers like Deere and CNH as a result of sellout contracts.

The UAW bureaucrats in the union's Detroit national headquarters, however, had a prosperous 2024.

The membership of the UAW, which plunged from a peak of 1.5 million in 1979 to a low of 355,000 in 2009, continued to stagnate last year. This is despite UAW President Shawn Fain's boasts of "organizing victories," including at the VW plant in Chattanooga, where an entire shift of workers just lost their jobs with no resistance from the UAW.

But the UAW bureaucracy long ago "decoupled" its income and affluent lifestyle from the living standards and even the number of dues-paying members. According to its filing, the UAW saw its assets rise to over \$1.1 billion (\$1,175,910,875) in 2024. This included \$778.5 million in marketable securities and other investments, \$150.4 million in US Treasury Securities and \$149.6 million in fixed assets.

All told, this amounts to \$3,134 in assets per member in 2024, almost double the \$1,638 per member the UAW bureaucracy controlled in 2000, when the union had 671,853 members.

While paying out only \$11 million in strike benefits last year, UAW Secretary-Treasurer Margaret Mock reported that the union had total "disbursements" of \$308.8 million last year. More than a third of this—\$109.9 million—was spent on salaries and other disbursements to the vast army of union bureaucrats at the union's national UAW "Solidarity House" headquarters in Detroit.

The UAW International's top 15 officers were paid a reported \$3.2 million in salaries and disbursements. This included President Shawn Fain (\$274,407), Secretary-Treasurer Mock (\$247,169) and the three UAW vice presidents who signed their names to the sellout agreements of GM, Stellantis and Ford workers in 2023: Michael Booth (\$235,968), Ronald Boyer (\$226,625) and Charles Browning (\$234,776).

In addition, the UAW spent another \$106.7 million on salaries and disbursement for another 953 "employees" of its national headquarters. The latter are servicing reps, international officers' secretaries, legal assistants and functionaries in other cushy jobs who do nothing to defend the interests of workers. In many cases, these positions and six-digit salaries go to the relatives and

flunkies of longstanding UAW executives.

Particularly noteworthy are the huge salaries of the coterie of Democratic Socialists of America members and Bernie Sanders operatives that Fain brought in to provide him with a "left" cover as he sold out the 2023 autoworkers strike and promoted the warmongers Biden and Harris.

These include:

- Region 9A Director Brandon Mancilla (\$223,744), a DSA member who oversaw the sellout of Harvard grad workers in 2021;
- Chief of Staff Donald "Chris" Brooks (\$211,968), a DSA member and former *Labor Notes* writer, who devised Fain's phony "stand up strike" strategy;
- Fain's "Top Administrative Assistant" Jonah Furman (\$175,318), the former *Labor Notes* staff writer and National Labor Organizer for the Bernie 2020 presidential campaign;
- Region 6 Director Michael Miller (\$219,218), an associate of Brandon Mancilla, who oversaw the sellout of the 2024 strike by California academic workers fighting to defend campus protests;
- Vail Kohnert-Yount (\$184,236 up from \$107,610 in 2023), Region 9A assistant director, a Democratic Party operative and Harvard Law School graduate who received her appointment after donating \$25,000 to Shawn Fain's election campaign; and
- Ben Dictor, a labor attorney and former finance director for Bernie Sanders also got a huge payoff. His Eisner & Dictor law firm was paid a total of \$798,966 in 2024 after getting \$484,870 from the UAW in 2023.

In December 2022, Will Lehman, a rank-and-file Mack Trucks worker and socialist who ran against Fain in the first round of the UAW presidential elections, warned:

If elected, the only change that would occur is that Fain would increase his current salary of \$156,364 as an "Administrative Assistant" at Solidarity House to the nearly \$300,000 that a UAW president pockets.

This proved to be completely accurate. In 2021 and 2022, Fain made \$156,364 and \$160,130, respectively, as an administrative assistant. After his election, he made \$228,872 in 2023 and \$274,407 in 2024. In other words, his pay has risen 75 percent since 2021. This came as he forced workers at the Detroit Three, Mack Trucks and countless other employers to accept contracts

that included wage increases that further eroded their living standards in the face of record of inflation and mass layoffs.

What is included in the annual filings with the US Labor Department, known as LM-2 forms, is only the reported salaries and financial activity. The union bureaucrats and their attorneys regularly conceal additional streams of income that pad their already bloated salaries, including seats on corporate boards, multi-billion-dollar joint retirement funds, and whatever kickbacks they received from investing workers' money in Wall Street hedge funds, real estate deals and other business ventures.

This is besides the routine use of union money for cars, resorts, retirement benefits and legal fees. Buried in the footnotes of the LM-2 filing was a note that Fain used \$3,449 worth of housing for personal use at the Black Lake facility and that former UAW Vice President Cynthia Estrada, who retired in 2021 amid corruption allegations, received \$15,894 for legal fees in 2024.

Finally, the UAW also spent \$21.8 million on "Political Activities and Lobbying" last year, including its failed effort to elect Harris and other Democrats committed to defending the financial and institutional interests of the labor bureaucracy.

The UAW financial report underscores the fact that this organization is controlled by a parasitic social layer whose income and lifestyles depend on rising stock markets and the intensified exploitation of the workers they falsely claim to represent. This is what lies behind the relentless efforts of the union bureaucracy to suppress the class struggle, subordinate workers to the capitalist parties and their wars, and the increasingly hysterical hostility toward the growing influence of revolutionary socialism among workers.

But the bureaucracy's allegiance is not only to the Democrats. Even as Trump deports student protesters—including UAW members—for opposing genocide and waging an all-out war on the working class, UAW President Shawn Fain has emerged as one of the most prominent backers of the fascist president, applauding his trade war policies. This expresses the engrained nationalist and pro-capitalist character of the entire apparatus, which is deeply hostile to the working class and comfortable accommodating itself to dictatorship.

The story is no different in other unions. The Teamsters, led by Sean O'Brien—another ally and promoter of Trump and the far right—has likewise aligned itself with the most reactionary forces. The entire AFL-CIO apparatus is preparing to impose war, austerity and state repression on behalf of the capitalist oligarchy.

According to union researcher Chris Bohner:

Since 2010, the net assets of the top twenty union headquarters grew from \$3.2 billion in 2010 to \$8.5 billion in 2023, or a 164% increase. This understates the massive growth in net assets because two-thirds of union assets are located at the local level, not at the headquarters level.

The 2024 UAW financial report also exposes the lie that Fain represents a break with the bureaucracy or a "reform" of the union.

Faced with the prospect of an all-out revolt by rank-and-file

workers after the UAW's betrayal of the 2019 GM strike, the Biden administration intervened to prop up the discredited apparatus. Through a court-appointed monitor, it organized a tightly controlled "democratic" process to channel opposition back into the arms of the bureaucracy. This included the first-ever direct membership vote for UAW top officers in 2022–23.

But the court-monitored election was a fraud from the beginning. The entrenched bureaucracy suppressed turnout by every means, particularly after the entry of socialist candidate Will Lehman. Fain, a longtime union official who had supported concessions and covered up corruption, was installed in an election with the lowest turnout in the history of the US labor movement.

Lehman's repeated legal challenges to ensure workers' right to vote in a fair election were opposed by Biden's Labor Department. Even after a federal judge ordered Biden's acting labor secretary to respond to Lehman's case, no response was ever issued. The entire election process was sanctioned by the government as part of its effort to preserve the union apparatus.

Despite the deliberate effort to block workers from voting for him, Lehman won nearly 5,000 votes by insisting that replacing one bureaucrat with another would do nothing to advance workers' interests. His campaign was centered on building rank-and-file committees, democratically controlled by workers themselves, as the new organ of struggle and decision-making power.

Lehman also rejected the nationalist poison promoted by the UAW bureaucracy and fought for the unity of workers in the United States with their brothers and sisters in Mexico, Canada, China and across the world. He made clear that the fight against the corporations was inseparable from a fight against the capitalist profit system itself, and for socialism—the reorganization of society on the basis of social need, not private profit.

The experience of the Fain administration—its support for Biden's war drive, its praise for Trump's trade war agenda and its silence in the face of the assault on student workers—has exposed the true role of the UAW. The union bureaucracy is not a vehicle for defending workers but a tool of the ruling class. The urgent task is to throw out this corrupt and reactionary apparatus, transfer power to the rank and file, and arm the working class with an internationalist and socialist strategy.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact