

# GE Aerospace workers in Ohio and Kentucky face midnight strike deadline

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*Are you a GE Aerospace worker? Fill out the form at the end of this article to join the fight for rank-and-file committees.*

More than 600 GE Aerospace workers at two Cincinnati, Ohio area facilities are facing a major confrontation with the giant commercial and military aircraft engine manufacturer with their contract expiring Wednesday night at 11:59 pm. The workers, members of United Auto Workers union, voted by 84 percent last week to authorize a walkout.

Rank-and-file workers are determined to recoup decades of concessions accepted by the UAW bureaucracy, which have undermined their wages, health care benefits and working conditions. The company made \$17 billion in profits in 2022-24 and is expected to make another \$8.2 billion in 2025.

Corporate executives claim that health care costs are a major drain on profit and are demanding a nearly 40 percent increase of out-of-pocket medical costs in a new four-year agreement. Workers adamantly oppose this and are determined to win substantial pay increases to keep up with rising living costs. The last contract signed by the UAW in June 2023, included 5.7 percent and 7 percent raises that barely kept up with inflation.

Coming on top of the current month-long strike by 3,200 members of the International Association of Machinists at Boeing jet fighter plants in Missouri and Illinois, a strike by GE Aerospace workers would substantially impact the US war machine.

Some 460 UAW members at the Evendale, Ohio plant build marine and industrial engines for the US Navy and jet engines for commercial and military aircraft. Another 165 work at the Erlanger, Kentucky distribution center, which handles 73 percent of GE Aerospace's global parts flow. A strike would have immediate impact on GE's ability to deliver products worldwide.

"The prospect of a strike threatens to disrupt global supply chains for critical aerospace components, affecting both military and commercial engine production at a time of ongoing industry challenges," the aviation industry web site

Air Pro News warned Tuesday.

The UAW bureaucracy is determined to prevent a strike and impose another sellout deal as it has done at Electric Boat, Allison Transmission and other military contractors. UAW President Shawn Fain held a rally in Cincinnati Tuesday and announced that the UAW will hold a Facebook live event Wednesday night at 10 pm to "announce either a Tentative agreement, or a strike."

In a statement to the WSWS, Will Lehman, a Pennsylvania Mack Trucks worker who ran as a socialist candidate for UAW president in 2022, said, "I urge GE Aerospace workers to form rank-and-file committees now to take the conduct of this struggle into your own hands and prevent another sellout by the UAW bureaucracy.

"Fain and the UAW apparatus are totally aligned with Trump's trade war measures and his plans for world war. They will do everything they can to prevent workers from using our power to stop the destruction of our living standards and working conditions to pay for these wars.

"Like the Boeing workers, GE Aerospace workers are demanding an end to eroding real wages, intolerable work schedules, and exploitation from a corporation that profits from mass murder around the world. Workers must reject with contempt any appeal to national unity, security, or 'defense' used to justify war profiteering and suppress resistance from the working class.

"GE Aerospace workers must link up with Boeing and other workers by building rank-and-file committees in every workplace, affiliated with the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC)," Lehman said. "Our answer must be a coordinated industrial and political counteroffensive, uniting workers across sectors and borders to defend jobs, living standards, and democratic rights."

The Trump administration is pushing for the sale of GE aircraft engines as part of its trade war measures against America's European and Asian competitors. On Monday, Korea Air announced a \$50 billion order for 103 Boeing airplane and GE engines and servicing coinciding with the visit of South Korean President Lee Jae Myung to

Washington. GE will receive \$13.7 billion as part of the deal.

In a letter to workers, GE Aerospace executives held the threat of additional job cuts over the heads of workers, making it clear they were seeking far deeper concessions than the 2023 contract, prior to the spinoff of General Electric's aviation division into the separate entity GE Aerospace.

"Comparisons to the 2023 contract, which was made under unique circumstances, don't apply post-spin, as a standalone company. It's important to note that the Company doesn't offer headcount guarantees at any of our 60+ production sites globally. When we win for our customers, more work follows. That is the most reliable foundation for job security."

The letter said one of the company's proposals was to establish an "in-sourcing zone" in Evendale "to attract work from external suppliers. This pilot program would test new ways of working and build on our tradition of manufacturing excellence. This solution is not just about headcount numbers on a page but instead creating sustainable work that secures our future together."

The UAW bureaucracy has fully aligned itself with the "lean manufacturing" drive of the corporation, claiming that concessions are the only way to "save" jobs. In 2017, the UAW, the International Association of Machinists (IAM) and International Union of Electrical Workers-Communications Workers of America (IUE-CWA) gave up major concessions, including the elimination of company paid pensions for workers hired after 2012, along with reductions in vacation time and other benefits.

"We have a quasi-tier system because it takes new hires five years to get the 10 percent shift differentials. For years, GE has been trying to divide the new workers from those with 10 years and more," a worker told the WSWS.

In 2019, after claiming they would not go along with concessions accepted by other unions, UAW International and Local 647 officials pressured Cincinnati area workers to accept another sellout, telling them it was the company's "last, best, and final offer" and they would not get anything better.

In the end, the deal, which passed by only a few percentage points, reduced overtime premiums for coming into work early from double time to time-and-a-half and increased by one hour how long a worker had to work to get overtime. The UAW also gave up Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLA), health care premiums went up and dental and vision was put on a paid premium tier. "Our health care costs have gone up astronomically with our high-deductible plans," a worker told the WSWS in 2022.

The following year, workers voted to split off from

bargaining with the IUE-CWA and other unions because they were tired of concessionary contracts and were ready to strike. "The UAW was adamant they would not accept the same deal as the IUE, but in reality, what they accepted is pretty much the same deal," another worker told the WSWS in 2023.

On August 20 of this year, the IAM agreed to a five-year contract covering 550 workers at the Evendale plant, and in July, the IUE-CWA agreed to a deal for 2,200 workers in Massachusetts, Kentucky, Kansas and New York, which included a paltry 17 percent raise over four years. Union officials boasted that IUE-CWA and GE Aerospace were "committed to work together to collaborate on shared interests, including advancing the T901 engine program, which would power the Apache (AH-64) and Black Hawk (UH-60) helicopters; improving delivery by further implementing FLIGHT DECK, GE Aerospace's proprietary lean operating model..."

With opposition to UAW President Shawn Fain growing following the sellout of the Big Three auto contracts in 2023 and new revelations of corruption and gangsterism in the union apparatus, the UAW is putting on a show with "strike ready" rallies, demonstrations and talks of a strike even as union officials rush to reach a last-minute agreement in line with the IAM and IUE-CWA sellout deals.

"Nobody wants to strike, but UAW members at GE Aerospace are overwhelmingly ready to because of the company's outright insulting offers on the table," UAW Local 647 President Brian Strunk told the media.

The UAW bureaucracy have repeatedly offered their services in rearming American imperialism for world war, with Fain boasting about the union's role during World War II's so-called "Arsenal of Democracy." He has backed Trump's trade war measures and vicious attacks against Mexican and Canadian workers.

"We must organize outside and against the corrupt union bureaucracies through building the IWA-RFC," Lehman said. "Rank-and-file committees must take up the fight not just against individual employers but against the entire capitalist system. Instead of squandering society's resources on destruction, the working class must fight to convert the military-industrial complex into a socially useful industry, producing housing, public transit, medical equipment, and other critical resources for society."



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