

UAW bureaucracy shuts down powerful GE Aerospace strike in Cincinnati, Ohio area

Jerry White**21 September 2025**

The United Auto Workers shut down the three-week strike by 640 workers at GE Aerospace plants in the Greater Cincinnati, Ohio area on Friday. The walkout disrupted the production of marine and industrial engines for the US Navy and the distribution of parts to other GE Aerospace plants, which produce aircraft engines for the US, Israeli and other militaries.

The UAW bureaucracy, led by Shawn Fain, halted the powerful strike, in a further signal to the Trump administration that it can be relied on to suppress working-class opposition to the worsening economic and social situation and the fascist president's dictatorship and expanding wars. Fain has emerged as a pivotal supporter of Trump's trade war and economic nationalism and has offered the services of the UAW bureaucracy to impose labor discipline in the factories, especially in defense industry plants like GE Aerospace.

UAW officials claimed 82 percent of workers ratified the union-backed proposal, but did not release a breakdown of the results. This was not a vote of confidence in the UAW leadership by workers nor did it express workers' faith in the UAW's claims that the new five-year deal was a great victory. Instead, the workers who were left isolated on the picket line for three weeks, surviving on poverty-level UAW strike benefits of \$500 a week, did not believe that the UAW would bring back anything better and therefore voted to end the strike.

To push through the deal UAW President Shawn Fain, Region 2B Director David Green and the UAW Local 647 leaders resorted to a series of bureaucratic maneuvers. After announcing the two sides were far apart for weeks, UAW officials suddenly announced they reached a deal on September 12 and would hold a vote a week later. It took several more days to "finalize" the agreement.

The UAW released a self-serving contract "highlighter," but workers were given little or no time to study the actual 100-page contract. The so-called "white

book," i.e., the text of the actual full contract, was not released until two days before the vote. In a travesty of democracy, the ratification took place the day after so-called information meetings, the first and only time rank-and-file workers could question union leaders on the contract.

"I've never seen the contract and just been working off the information I've gotten from other workers," one worker told the *World Socialist Web Site* after voting on Friday. "They say the contract passed and we'll be back to work on Monday."

Predictably, UAW Local 647 President Brian Strunk declared that the union had won a total victory. "Together we stood like David against Goliath—shoulder to shoulder against a billion-dollar company, refusing to be treated as just numbers. We secured job security, more time with our families, and money to offset health care costs."

That is a lie.

There are numerous discrepancies between the "highlights" presented by Strunk and other officials to workers at the meeting and the actual terms of the contract that GE Aerospace workers will be locked into until September 15, 2030. The UAW highlights brochure presented the deal as guaranteeing job security, offsetting health care costs, and giving automatic COLA and retirement gains, while the white book shows these are conditional, limited, or offset by higher costs and concessions.

- **Wages:** General increases are 5 percent (Oct. 2025), 5 percent (Oct. 2026), 3 percent (Oct. 2027), 3 percent (Oct. 2028), and 3.5 percent (Oct. 2029). Workers also receive a 15 cents/hour COLA each year through Jan. 2029, conditional on accepting the same grievance/arbitration/no-strike language as in prior contracts. These raises, slightly above the 3 percent official annual inflation rate, are expected to be offset by rising out-of-pocket health costs.

• **Health care:** The brochure claims rising premiums are customers, and driving our shared success.” offset by “Accelerated Cash Payments” (\$1,000 in 2026–27, \$1,500 in 2028). The white book shows contributions rising 6 percent in 2026–28, with family coverage at \$100k–\$149,999 income reaching \$150.03/week by 2028, plus smoker surcharges. Deductibles and out-of-pocket maximums also climb (\$100–\$250 in Option 1; \$150–\$375 in Option 2; \$200–\$500 in Option 3). ACPs are one-time, taxable, and insufficient to cover permanent premium hikes.

• **Job security:** The UAW cites a “minimum headcount” guarantee through September 14, 2029, plus 32 jobs at Erlanger, Kentucky and 50 at Evendale, Ohio. In reality, the guarantee is 620 jobs for four years, with exemptions for “extraordinary events” (pandemics, disasters, etc.). Job commitments are contingent on “lean production commitments,” certifications, KPIs, and other performance metrics, giving management leeway to void them. Despite decades of such promises, UAW membership at Evendale has collapsed from 5,000 to under 500 over the past 30 years.

• **Time off:** The contract provides modest increases: new hires get 24 hours of personal time, rising to 32 hours after 1 year, 40 after 15 years, and 48 after 25 years. Vacation accrual shifts slightly (e.g., 10 years = 4 weeks, 15 years = 4 weeks 3 days). Changes are incremental, not the “major increases” claimed.

This sellout vindicates the warnings made by the *World Socialist Web Site* and the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) that workers needed to wrest control of the strike from the hands of the union apparatus. On September 15 the IWA-RFC called on workers to demand the immediate release of the entire contract and a full week to study and discuss it and campaign for its overwhelming rejection. The IWA-RFC further called on workers to form a rank-and-file committee, made up of the most trusted militants, to replace the stooges in the bargaining committee and prepare an all-out strike at all GE facilities to overturn concessions agreed to by the other unions in Massachusetts, New York, Kansas and Kentucky.

Meanwhile, Wall Street and GE Aerospace executives are celebrating the deal. The company’s stock prices shot up the day of the vote on Friday and Christian Meisner, Chief Human Resources Officer, GE Aerospace gushed that the company was “pleased” with the vote, adding, “With these contracts in place, we look forward to our UAW-represented employees returning to work and resuming normal operations, continuing to deliver for our

Just days before, GE Aerospace management had threatened to fire workers from other unions who had honored UAW members’ picket lines. The other unions, which had previously signed sellout deals, surrendered before these threats.

Fain and the UAW apparatus never wanted the strike in the first place. They only called the strike after they became convinced they could not get another rotten deal passed without calling workers out and wearing down their resistance. At that point Fain’s PR department issued videos and militant-sounding rhetoric about fighting “corporate greed.” Once the strike began, the UAW International isolated the workers while local officials paraded Democratic former senator Sherrod Brown—who voted in 2022 voted to ban the railroad strike—on the picket line, falsely presenting him as an ally. At the same time, they were in daily behind-the-scenes discussion with Republican US Senator Bernie Moreno, a right-wing Trump attack dog, to end the strike.

This betrayal is only the latest proof of the corporatist and anti-working-class character of the corrupt bureaucracies that control the United Auto Workers, the International Association of Machinists (IAM), the International Union of Electrical Workers-Communications Workers of America (IUE-CWA) and other unions.

The only way workers can fight the corporate onslaught on their jobs and conditions and mobilize their strength to defeat Trump’s attack on their social and democratic rights is by building rank-and-file committees in every factory, so workers, not the union bureaucracy, can democratically discuss and decide their demands and course of action. These committees must fight for the international unity of the working class against the economic nationalism of the union bureaucracy, and fight for an industrial and political counter-offensive against Trump’s dictatorship and the capitalist system, which both corporate-controlled parties defend.

Fill out the form below to join the fight for rank-and-file committees.



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