

Mack Trucks worker Will Lehman announces 2026 campaign for UAW president on a platform for rank-and-file power

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Will Lehman, a 39-year-old Mack Trucks worker in Macungie, Pennsylvania, today announced his candidacy for president of the United Auto Workers (UAW) in the 2026 elections.

In his campaign announcement, Lehman announced that he had set up a website, WillforUAWPresident.org. He called for workers to support his campaign, including by running as delegates for the UAW Constitutional Convention, which will be held from June 15-18. The convention will nominate candidates for the national leadership elections that will be held later in the year.

Lehman outlined four central demands of his campaign:

First, “To end the dictatorship of the Solidarity House bureaucracy over the union, purge the UAW of hundreds of parasitic union bureaucrats, promote the creation of a network of rank-and-file committees, and transfer power and decision making from the pro-corporate union apparatus to workers on the shop floor.”

Second, ending the collaboration of the UAW with the corporations. “Forty-five years of pro-corporate policies must be replaced with a strategy of class struggle,” Lehman stated. His program calls for wages that fully recover losses caused by past concessions and inflation, a zero-layoff policy, health insurance at the company’s expense, and the historic demand for a 30-hour week with no loss of pay.

Third, Lehman calls for repudiating the chauvinism and nationalism of the UAW bureaucracy. “Workers have nothing to gain from a trade war, which amounts to a struggle among capitalists for control of markets and a greater share of profits gained through the exploitation of the working class,” he declared. “What we need is an international strategy based on the unified struggle of American, Canadian and Mexican workers against transnational corporations.”

Fourth, Lehman calls for mobilizing the industrial power of the union membership to defend democratic rights and oppose war.

Lehman previously ran for UAW president in 2022. He won nearly 5,000 votes—almost 5 percent of ballots cast—despite massive voter suppression by the union apparatus that resulted in a historically low turnout of just 9 percent.

Lehman’s announcement comes amid a deepening crisis in the auto industry. More than 21,000 autoworker jobs have been eliminated in the US since the beginning of 2024. Last month, General Motors reduced Detroit’s Factory Zero to a single shift, eliminating 1,140 jobs. Ford has extended layoffs at its Dearborn facilities and Kentucky battery plants, and more than 2,500 Stellantis workers remain laid off in Michigan, Ohio and other states.

“This is not a normal election, because these are not normal times,” Lehman said. “Across the country, workers in the UAW and throughout industry face a wave of mass layoffs driven by automation, speedup, and unsafe conditions.”

Lehman’s campaign is being launched amid a growing strike movement across the US that is increasingly coming into conflict with the trade union apparatus. Healthcare workers, teachers and other sections of the working class are entering into struggle across the country, fighting back against decades of declining living standards, only to find the union bureaucracies working to suppress and isolate their struggles.

At the same time, the working class confronts an unprecedented assault on democratic rights. Lehman points to this in his launch video, stating, “ICE agents roam our cities with a license to kill. In Minneapolis, Renée Good, a mother of three, and union brother Alex

Pretti have been murdered. Trump, the frontman for Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos and other billionaires, is determined to set up an American version of Hitler's Third Reich."

The eruption of social opposition in 2025 and 2026—from mass protests against deportations to growing resistance to war and austerity—has demonstrated the enormous potential power of the working class. But this power, Lehman stated, cannot be realized as long as workers remain "bound hand and foot by a union apparatus that works against us at every turn. As it is presently constituted, the UAW is a union in name only. It functions to isolate us, discipline us, and protect the interests of a privileged bureaucracy that is in bed with the companies and the government."

In his launch video, Lehman notes that the UAW holds \$1.1 billion in assets, with nearly \$800 million invested in stocks, bonds and mutual funds. The union employs around 1,000 people, of whom nearly 470 take home over \$100,000 a year. UAW President Shawn Fain is paid \$270,000, Secretary-Treasurer Margaret Mock makes \$247,000, the three vice presidents average \$235,000 each, and the nine regional directors average \$220,000.

"These officials sit in the top 5 percent of income earners in the United States," Lehman states. "They are not subject to the same economic shocks we face."

Lehman added that his campaign is "not about getting me into some cushy office at Solidarity House—I'm not going to be moving there. I will stay on the shop floor. The aim of this campaign is not to replace one official with another, but to abolish the bureaucracy and transfer power to the rank-and-file."

In the 2022 election—the first direct vote for UAW leadership in over 70 years—the bureaucracy engaged in massive voter suppression. Out of 1.1 million eligible voters, only 104,776 cast ballots, the lowest turnout for any national union election in US history.

Lehman filed multiple legal challenges. In June 2024, federal district court Judge David Lawson ruled in Lehman's favor, finding that the Biden administration's Department of Labor had acted "arbitrarily and capriciously" in dismissing his complaints. Bloomberg Law described the ruling as a "rare rebuke" of the Labor Department. Despite this victory, both the Biden and Trump administrations sanctioned the illegitimate vote.

Lehman's campaign announcement also comes as the Fain administration is engulfed in corruption scandals. Court-appointed UAW Monitor Neil Barofsky has documented a "toxic culture of division and retaliation at the highest levels of the organization." Fain himself is

under investigation for allegedly threatening to "slit the f***ing throats" of anyone who challenged his inner circle, and for obstructing the monitor's investigation.

"Shawn Fain came to power promising reform," Lehman states. "But what have we gotten? Layoffs. Concessions. The stand-up strike that left most workers on the job. And now, the revelation of more corruption. The truth is, this bureaucracy can't be reformed. It must be abolished."

At the conclusion of his launch video, Lehman states: "I am running as a socialist and an internationalist. Socialism means a society run by the working class, not the billionaires, who profit off our exploitation. We must reject every attempt to divide us by race, nationality or ethnicity and fight to unite workers across borders in a common struggle."

Lehman ends with an appeal to UAW members to be active in the campaign. In particular, he called on workers to "demand that your local hold a well-publicized meeting at which delegates to the UAW Constitutional Convention will be selected democratically." He called on workers to "elect delegates, or become a delegate yourself, to the UAW Constitutional Convention for your local to ensure that I am nominated as a candidate."

Invoking the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution, Lehman concluded: "As the great Tom Paine wrote, 'These are the times that try men's souls.' The time has come to revive our revolutionary ideals."

For more information on Will Lehman's campaign for UAW president, visit WillforUAWPresident.org.



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