United Auto Workers financial report shows 2025 another bumper year for union apparatus as assets rise to $1.25 billion

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The recently released U.S. Department of Labor financial report (LM-2) for the United Auto Workers shows that net assets and salaries for the union bureaucracy rose yet again in 2025—even as layoffs mounted and the union apparatus blocked strike action or quickly shut down walkouts, imposing wage settlements that failed to keep pace with inflation.

While UAW President Shawn Fain hailed a modest increase of 17,000 members—a large portion in the academic sector—this obscures the reality that layoffs continued across major UAW-represented auto plants. The impact of Donald Trump's tariffs and trade war program, fully supported by UAW leadership, has contributed to ongoing instability and uncertainty in the industry.

Against this backdrop, UAW net assets rose to $1,250,132,191 in 2025, up from $1,175,910,875 the previous year. The bulk of these assets—$856.9 million—is invested in marketable securities through the strike fund, tying the union's financial position closely to Wall Street. This alignment creates a direct financial incentive for the apparatus to block strike action and suppress class struggle in the interest of maintaining corporate profitability.

The UAW listed another $161 million in net value for its luxurious Black Lake education center and golf course in Northern Michigan.

Perhaps even more revealing is what's not front and center in LM-2: the UAW Retiree Health Care Trust Fund held approximately $63 billion in assets in 2024, including more than $7.7 billion in General Motors stock. While nominally independent, top UAW officials, including Fain, oversee the trust, which distributes roughly $300 million annually in administrative expenses. By transferring responsibility for retiree healthcare from the auto companies to the union, retiree benefits have been placed at the mercy of stock market fluctuations.

At the same time, control of such a vast fund has provided the bureaucracy with significant influence in the financial world and access to lucrative management fees. It also means the UAW apparatus directly benefits from a shortening of retirees' lifespans since this results in smaller payouts from the trust fund.

Solidarity House collected $226,524,129 in dues in 2025 through the per capita tax of about $577 in annual dues deducted from the paychecks of every active member. Meanwhile, it only paid out $8.5 million in strike pay. The few strikes that were called were quickly shut down, such as the walkout at GE Aerospace in Greater Cincinnati, where the resulting agreement met none of the workers' key demands and imposed wage increases of just 3 percent—effectively offset by inflation and rising healthcare costs.

The largest category of spending was "representational activities," largely consisting of salaries and expenses, including travel and conferences held at resorts, luxury hotels, and casinos—often in warm weather vacation spots far removed from the major auto plants in the Midwest.

The salaries of the bloated UAW apparatus are by far the single largest expenditure, $107.1 million. The average compensation for the UAW's staff of 950 apparatchiks rose to $112,000—well above the pay of the average shop-floor worker. This figure excludes local UAW officers, many of whom also earn six-figure salaries. Top officials earned significantly above the average: Fain received $276,378 in reported salary and expense allowances; Vice President Rich Boyer received $265,000; Vice President Mike Booth received $248,270; and Secretary-Treasurer Margaret Mock took home $250,633.

A relatively unknown staffer, Sherrod Elledge, received an extraordinary $520,244 in salary and expenses. Elledge is listed as a "health and safety specialist" who has taught workshops at Eastern Michigan University and also participated in an international labor and health course in Guarulhos, Brazil.

This raises serious questions: Who authorized such a payout for an unelected official? What responsibilities supposedly justify compensation at this level—excessive even by the standards of the UAW apparatus?

Thomas Adams, a retired GM worker and expert on UAW finances, told the WSWS that Elledge's "training" job title, "sounds very much like a joint program," which generally "does not fall within the realm of financial disclosure of the labor department." Usually, he said, "those programs have no oversight. There's no recording of how much money or how many people work for joint programs and that hasn't changed since the round of UAW officers doing time in prison."

In addition to their reported salaries, top UAW officers receive payoffs from joint programs and seats on pension trust fund and corporate boards, which are not listed on the LM-2 forms.

On top of paying exorbitant salaries to its bloated staff, other major expenses in 2025, included $13.6 million in legal fees, largely tied to ongoing federal oversight stemming from corruption investigations. These costs include efforts to address continuing allegations and internal factional conflicts involving figures such as Mock and Boyer and legal fees to protect UAW officials from corruption charges. Since the appointment of UAW Monitor Neil Barofsky by a federal judge to oversee the union five years ago, the UAW has paid $25.39 million in fees to Barofsky's law firm, Jenner & Block.

The UAW also spent millions on conferences and training sessions, frequently held at vacation destinations. These included events at the Hyatt Regency Louisville ($379,016), the Grand Hyatt San Diego ($450,118), the TradeWinds Resort in St. Petersburg, Florida ($650,423) and the Atlanta Marriott ($706,791), among others.

As the WSWS has asserted, the UAW long ago severed its connection to the class struggle and the defense of workers' interests, functioning increasingly as a business entity. The rising salaries and perks of the union apparatus are tied to its expansive investment portfolio and its close, institutionalized relationship with auto company management through numerous joint committees.

Among the most notorious are the joint training centers, which were exposed during corruption investigations as channels for funneling company funds directly to top union officials. Despite plans to dismantle these centers, the 2025 LM-2 shows the UAW still received over $16 million from joint programs with General Motors, Ford and Chrysler.

Under this corporatist model, the UAW has developed a financial incentive to suppress strikes—particularly to avoid drawing down its substantial strike fund, which functions as a reserve controlled by the bureaucracy.

This situation is the outcome of a strategic shift beginning in the 1980s, when the UAW and other unions abandoned any traditions of the class struggle and adopted the program of corporatist "partnership" with management under conditions of globalization. Since the formal adoption by the UAW of union management collaboration, the apparatus has overseen the destruction of hundreds of thousands of jobs in the auto industry, a major reduction in real wages and the evisceration of hard won benefits, including defined benefit pensions, the eight-hour workday and the principle of equal pay for equal work.

Meanwhile, the UAW bureaucracy has overseen worsening conditions in the plants, due to speedup, forced overtime and continued downsizing. In 2025, a series of high-profile injuries and deaths underscored these deteriorating conditions. Among them was the death of veteran skilled trades worker Ronald Adams Sr., who was crushed while working on machinery at the Stellantis Dundee Engine Plant in Michigan. Investigations into the incident—reportedly involving failures in lockout-tagout procedures overseen by the union—have stalled amid collaboration between Stellantis management and the UAW. Despite widespread outrage, there is no indication that Elledge, the union's highly paid safety specialist, played any role in addressing the case.

The growing wealth of the UAW reflects its role in supporting corporate and state interests. After years of backing the Democratic Party, Fain has emerged as a prominent union supporter of the Trump administration and its policies of trade conflict, austerity and expanded executive authority.

Today, UAW is a union in name only. Instead of fighting for workers' interests it operates as an arm of management, suppressing worker resistance through a web of labor-management structures. This will only change when workers break the stranglehold of the bureaucracy by building rank-and-file committees to transfer power from the UAW apparatus to workers on the shop floor. A new leadership must be forged based on the fight for the global unity of workers in opposition to the capitalist profit system.