

# UAW bureaucracy releases “highlights” of fourth sellout deal at Nexteer

Jerry White  
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*The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) is hosting an online meeting Sunday, June 7 at 4pm (EDT) “Break the isolation of the American Axle strike! Unite with Nexteer and all auto workers!” Fill out this form to register for the meeting.*

United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 699 officials on Wednesday began releasing the “highlights” of their fourth tentative agreement with Nexteer Automotive, which was announced Tuesday. The 1,700 workers at the former GM Steering Division plant in Saginaw, Michigan, have rejected three previous pro-company agreements pushed by the UAW International and their local frontmen.

Rank-and-file workers have already denounced the deal as the same contract they have already rejected three times—with little more than a single cosmetic change. The signing bonus has been increased from \$2,500 to \$3,000.

Nexteer workers should reject the fourth TA with the same conviction they brought to the first three. Workers should demand the full contract language and a full week to read, study and discuss it before any vote is held and refuse to cast that vote under corporate supervision.

Wage rates are unchanged: Starting pay remains at \$19.50 an hour, and top pay reaches \$27 an hour—but not until 2030. The tier system remains intact and expanded, with its 48-month progression for post-ratification hires. There are vague references to profit-sharing and cost-of-living protections, but no specific dollar amounts, no COLA triggers and no details on benefit changes. And there are, as in every previous TA, zero protections against layoffs—under conditions in which as many as 400 workers could lose their jobs shortly after ratification.

The \$27-an-hour top rate is the same wage workers earned at this plant in 2005. Adjusted for inflation, that wage is worth \$45.65 today—meaning workers are being asked to accept a top rate by 2030 that would still be 40 percent less in real terms from a quarter century ago. The \$3,000 signing bonus, sharply reduced after taxes and dues, is a cynical ploy exploiting the economic distress among members that the UAW is chiefly responsible for creating.

The bonus and first-year raise of \$2.50 an hour is being used to entice lower-seniority workers, but they will be the first ones thrown out of their jobs when the company consolidates its operations.

A member of the Nexteer Workers Rank-and-File Committee told the WSWS, “The \$3,000 signing bonus is not going to do anything about the high cost of living. We’ve gone back to the table for the fourth time and they’re still not giving us what we need. We need a cost-of-living increase based on the consumer price index, because inflation doesn’t stop.”

He added: “If we were out with the American axle workers, we would not only squeeze our two companies but also the Big Three. But the International is keeping us from striking. We’re not only going to have TA#4, we’re going to have TA#23 if they keep this up. It’s tiresome to keep getting the same TAs we voted down.

“People realize the International and local officials don’t have our interests at heart. They’re telling us this contract is great and not to believe our own eyes. That’s what old man Trump is saying. ‘The price of gas isn’t too high, you can afford to put it in, just don’t drive.’ Half a tank of gas was like 64 bucks today.”

Although promised on Tuesday, as of this writing the UAW has not released the full contract with all its side letters and memoranda of understanding. Nor has it said when and where the rollout meetings and ratification vote will take place. Rollouts of the previous contracts took place inside the plant and were largely run by management, with union officials saying nothing. Ratification votes were then rushed before workers had the time to read, study and discuss a 250-page plus contract, which will dictate the terms of their employment for the next four years.

Workers have told the WSWS the union may try to hold the next ratification vote itself inside the factory under the watchful eye of management in a blatant attempt to “bum rush” them into voting yes, as one Nexteer Workers Rank-and-File Committee members said.

The fourth TA is being rushed through against the

backdrop of a strike by approximately 1,000 American Axle workers at Three Rivers, Michigan, which began Monday. American Axle workers produce axles for GM's Chevrolet Silverado and GMC Sierra—some of the most profitable vehicles in the industry—and have struck for the first time since 2008, backed by a 98 percent authorization vote.

Nexteer, less than 200 miles north, supplies steering components to the same Big Three automakers. There is widespread support among both sections of workers for a joint strike that could halt assembly lines within days.

That is precisely what the UAW apparatus is working around the clock to prevent. UAW Region 1-D Director Steve Dawes, speaking to WJRT, the Flint, Michigan, ABC television affiliate, said the fourth Nexteer TA was “a great agreement.” He told WJRT that workers should “take it home, talk to your family—do not let social media dictate what your future looks like.”

Directing workers to deliberate privately rather than collectively routes their decision-making through individual household pressure rather than shop-floor solidarity. The bureaucracy knows exactly what fear would dominate that conversation: Can we survive on \$500 a week in strike benefits—while the UAW sits on a \$1.1 billion treasury built from workers' dues.

The attack on “social media” is the attack on the WSWS and the Nexteer Rank-and-File Committee—the only sources providing accurate information about what is actually in these contracts. Workers' access to that information and a fighting program has proven to be the greatest obstacle to the conspiracy between company and union officials. “He's telling us not to believe our own eyes,” a rank-and-file committee member said of Dawes' comments. “It's all propaganda.”

Dawes claimed that Nexteer was making great offers, while the UAW had to call a strike at American Axle because the company was being intransigent. He suggested that the three rejected contracts were simply how negotiations went at times. “We go back to the membership. What didn't you like in it? We go back and negotiate, get another agreement, bring it to the members and let them decide. That has happened at Nexteer multiple times. At American Axle, nothing,” Dawes said.

In fact, the union bureaucracy has repeatedly defied the will of the membership at Nexteer—repeatedly extending contracts behind workers' backs and ignoring the 86 percent strike mandate on May 21. As for American Axle, the bureaucracy intends to wrap up the strike long before it has any serious impact on the Big Three and then declare “victory” for the upcoming UAW Constitutional Convention on June 15.

The revolt at Nexteer and the emergence of a rank-and-file

committee to lead it has thrown a wrench into the bureaucracy's plans, which is now desperately trying to prevent any all-out fight by auto parts workers. This week, UAW officials are attempting to ram through contracts at Allison Off-Highway in Lafayette, Indiana, and have announced a deal at Dana—with workers given no details about what is actually in it. Magna International and Bridgewater Interiors workers also face expiring contracts.

A Stellantis worker at the Detroit Assembly Complex-Jefferson expressed his support for a unified strike: “It would be beneficial for all of us if everybody stuck together, and workers at GM, Ford and Stellantis did sympathy strikes to support them. If we said, ‘We're going on strike until you come up with an agreement for Nexteer and American Axle’—it would happen within the next day. There's no reason there should be such a wage disparity between us.

“After the 2008 strike they cut the American Axle workers' pay from \$29 to \$14.50. That was amazing to me. My uncle used to work for American Axle and when that happened, he decided to retire and get out.

“The union officials are trying to take away our right to withhold our labor, the most basic power we have. They're not on the side of the people at Nexteer or Stellantis that work. They want to get as many cars out regardless of the conditions we face. Assembly plant workers and parts workers should not see ourselves as separate and different—we're all working to make money to live our lives.”

The power to win this struggle lies in the unity of Nexteer, American Axle, Dana, Magna, Bridgewater and parts workers across the industry, organized through rank-and-file committees independent of an apparatus that has spent four decades administering workers' defeat.

*Contact the Nexteer Workers Rank-and-File Committee at [nexteerworkersrffc@gmail.com](mailto:nexteerworkersrffc@gmail.com) or text (947) 622-2198.*



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