

Bridgewater Interiors auto parts workers reject sellout while Dana workers set to vote on contract deal

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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!” To attend the meeting register at this link.

Workers at Bridgewater Interiors in Warren, Michigan, are the latest group of auto parts workers to reject a rotten tentative agreement pushed by the United Auto Workers (UAW). The approximately 1,000 workers in Warren are members of UAW Local 400 and make seating and interior components for major auto companies including General Motors, Ford, Stellantis and Honda.

Despite the contract rejection, Local 400 officials have not called for a strike authorization vote or set a strike deadline because the UAW bureaucracy does not want any further strikes in the auto supply chain. UAW President Shawn Fain was forced to call a strike by 1,000 American Axle workers but it is forcing 1,700 Nexteer Automotive workers to stay on the job after rejecting three UAW-backed contracts.

Hundreds of other workers at Bridgewater plants in Detroit and Lansing work under separate contracts. Bridgewater workers have struggled for years earning poverty level pay that compels workers to work overtime or take multiple jobs in order to survive. Starting pay is currently \$17.50 an hour and tops out at \$25.75 after five years. The rejected contract reportedly did not include cost-of-living raises or other improvements such as pensions.

The rejection takes place as thousands of workers at Dana plants in the Midwest are preparing to vote on a new four-year contract. According to the UAW

Competitive Shop/IPS department that oversees the UAW auto parts sector, the deal “includes the wage increases our members deserve, a great healthcare plan that is very affordable and benefits all members and their families. The negotiating team was also able to make additional increases to the pension as well.” No other details have been made public.

The vagueness of these assertions and the fact that, as of this writing, not even cherry-picked contract “highlights” have been made available signals that the deal is another sellout. Following the pattern of previous deals, the UAW is trying to spring the details on workers at the last minute and then rush through a vote without giving workers access to the full contract language or enough time to study and consider it.

Leading up to the 2026 negotiations, workers at the Toledo Driveline plant and other facilities actively raised concerns regarding grueling work schedules, including 12-hour shifts, six to seven days a week. Dana workers are also determined to eliminate the hated tier structure that was continued in previous sellout agreements. In 2021, Dana workers voted down two sellout contracts foisted by the UAW. The unions used a \$3,000 signing bonus to force through the deal on the third attempt.

Since that time, Dana workers have faced continuing attacks, including 265 layoffs at the Lima, Ohio, facility and the closure of Dana Thermal Products plant in Auburn Hills, Michigan, costing 200 jobs.

Earlier this year, Allison Transmission finalized a \$2.7 billion purchase of Dana’s Off-Highway facility in Lafayette, Indiana, separating those workers from the rest of Dana in a separate bargaining unit whose officials recently announced the passage of their own

sellout agreement.

A Dana driveline worker in Toledo told the *World Socialist Web Site*, “It’s how much we are being paid that is the issue. The lack of transparency is something. It’s been a month since we heard anything. Why are we being kept in the dark?”

He said the contract information meeting is on Friday and the vote is this Monday. “Not that many people are going to be able to read through [the whole contract]. I hope everyone votes ‘no.’ What I have heard so far, it doesn’t even reflect the cost of living this year, let alone four years from now. Cost of living raises are not in there.

“No one is able to save money; we are living check to check. That’s not the American Dream; you are supposed to be able buy a house and take a trip. Instead, it’s, ‘Do I really want food this week?’”

The auto parts industry is dominated by giant global players with billions in assets and revenue. Bridgewater was founded in 1998 as a joint venture between Detroit-based Epsilon Technology, a minority business venture, and Johnson Controls. It operates four plants in two states employing about 2,400 workers.

The company is currently headed by President and CEO Ronald E. Hall, Jr. and is a certified Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) by the Michigan Minority Supplier Development Council. It generates an estimated \$2 billion in annual revenue making it one of the largest “black owned” enterprises in the US. This has not stopped it from super-exploiting African American, white and immigrant workers alike.

Bridgewater’s joint venture partner Johnson Controls spun off its auto seating sector to form Adient in 2016. Adient is a transnational conglomerate that employs more than 65,000 people in some 200 manufacturing plants spread across 29 countries.

Dana generates some \$7.5 billion in annual revenue and operates some 100 plants in 24 countries. Its largest stockholders are multi-billion dollar asset management firms BlackRock and Vanguard Group.

The contract battles at Dana and Bridgewater are part of expanding fights by auto parts workers. Workers at American Axle, rebranded Dauch Corporation, in Three Rivers, Michigan, have launched a strike over poverty wages, currently topping out at \$22 an hour.

Meanwhile, Nexteer workers are opposing a fourth UAW-backed tentative agreement that fails to address

substandard pay, inferior health benefits and the hated tier system.

A Dana worker pointed out that auto parts workers were in a powerful position, noting that a strike by Dana workers in Toledo, for example, would quickly shut down production at the Stellantis Jeep plant in the same city. “I think that will be the only way to get a livable wage,” he added.

“We are all in solidarity” with workers at American Axle and Nexteer he said. “I did see that they took big pay cuts (in the wake of the sellout of their 2008 strike by the UAW). Dana made more than \$1 billion in profits. We are the most profitable Dana facility. It’s not right.”

While the administration of UAW President Shawn Fain shouts empty rhetoric about “unity” and “solidarity,” all these battles are being deliberately isolated from each other by the UAW leadership. This must end. The issue posed to auto parts workers and all autoworkers is the development of a movement from below to break the grip of the UAW apparatus through building rank-and-file committees as the voice of workers on the shop floor. This is needed not just in the auto supplier sector but throughout the auto industry.

The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) is assisting workers at Nexteer, American Axle, Dana and other parts manufacturers to build these committees. The task is to defeat the sabotage by the UAW apparatus by transferring power to the workers on the shop floor. These committees must establish direct lines of communication and coordinated action and win active support from wider sections of workers in the US and internationally.

To learn how to join and build rank-and-file committees, fill out the form below.



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