

# Will Lehman issues open letter to UAW members and delegates on eve of Constitutional Convention

Our reporters

9 June 2026

Will Lehman, the Mack Trucks worker waging a rank-and-file campaign for the presidency of the United Auto Workers, distributed an open letter Tuesday to a list of 300,000 UAW members maintained by the federal monitor, calling on delegates to nominate him from the floor of the union's Constitutional Convention, which opens in Detroit on June 15.

"The aim of my campaign is not to swap one official for another," Lehman writes in the letter, which was also posted on his website. "It is to organize a rebellion against the dictatorship of the UAW apparatus and restore power where it belongs: the rank and file on the shop floor."

To every delegate, the letter states: "Nominate me on the convention floor on a program of rank-and-file power." To every UAW member: "Press the delegates from your local to do exactly that, and join this movement."

Lehman says UAW members are facing an "absolutely desperate situation," pointing to inflation accelerating under the impact of "the criminal war against Iran"; multi-year contracts that "erode living standards"; the auto companies "using AI and other advanced technologies to carry out a jobs bloodbath."

He then declares:

There are two forces in the UAW: the rank-and-file workers who work every day and pay dues, and a bloated bureaucracy of highly paid officials who work against our interests at every turn. This has not changed under the Fain administration. It has only gotten worse.

The letter was issued under conditions of growing militancy and an incipient revolt against the UAW bureaucracy. In Three Rivers, Michigan, 1,000 workers at the American Axle (Dauch Corp.) plant walked off the job on June 1 for the first time since 2008, when the UAW accepted a 50 percent cut in their wages. At the GM Flint Assembly plant, rank-and-file workers have objected to the use of axles from the strikebound plant.

At Nexteer Automotive in Saginaw, Michigan, 1,700 workers

have rejected three UAW-backed tentative agreements and voted by 86 percent to authorize a strike. A rank-and-file committee has emerged, which is campaigning to defeat a fourth contract and join the American Axle workers in a common strike. Workers at Bridgewater Interiors in Warren, Michigan, and at Dana in Ft. Wayne, Indiana, overwhelmingly rejected UAW deals.

Among academic workers—who make up a quarter of all UAW members—there is growing anger against the bureaucracy, including at Harvard where the UAW International shut down a 41-day strike without a contract or any meaningful concession.

In every struggle, Lehman explained, workers are confronting an apparatus that works not to mobilize the membership against the employers but to contain and disorganize the workers it claims to represent.

This pattern is grounded in the very structure of the institution. The UAW International holds \$1.1 billion in assets. Of its roughly 1,000 employees, nearly 470 take home more than \$100,000 a year. Fain himself earns \$270,000; Secretary-Treasurer Margaret Mock, \$247,000; the three vice presidents average \$235,000; the nine regional directors, \$220,000. Beneath them sit 500 to 600 International Representatives—who are paid \$140,000 to \$160,000, what Lehman characterizes as "industrial police"—whose function is to enforce leadership decisions and ensure that strikes do not take place.

Lehman states that the apparatus intends to hold the convention as a coronation of Fain's "Stand Up" slate—described in Lehman's letter as "a rogues' gallery of Fain and former Curry supporters"—with no accounting for the past four years and no opening for an independent rank-and-file candidate.

Fain came to power after elections held in 2022-23, the first direct elections for executive offices of the UAW International. That election was forced on the bureaucracy from the outside, by the federal corruption probe that sent former UAW presidents Gary Jones and Dennis Williams, along with more than a dozen other officials, to federal prison for embezzlement and corporate bribe-taking, and by a 2021 referendum

demanding by the membership which the entrenched leadership bitterly opposed.

Under the conditions of the 2022 election, the bureaucracy did everything in its power to keep the rank and file in the dark. Out of 1.1 million eligible voters, only 104,776 ballots were cast—a turnout of 9 percent, the lowest of any national union election in United States history. More ballots were returned as “undeliverable” than were cast. In some large academic local unions, fewer than 1 percent of members voted. The court-appointed Monitor relied on the Local Union Information System (LUIS) for mailing ballots, a database that favored union officials and disenfranchised wide sections of the rank and file and retirees.

Despite this suppression, Lehman’s campaign received 4,777 votes, nearly 5 percent of those cast, running openly on a program for the abolition of the apparatus and the building of rank-and-file committees. Fain took the presidency with the support of barely 6 percent of eligible UAW members, a mandate from a tiny minority, hand-picked by a process the apparatus designed to keep itself in power.

Between July and November of that year, Lehman and his supporters filed at least 18 complaints with the Monitor over election irregularities; the Monitor either ignored them or dismissed them. After the Department of Labor rejected his complaint in a three-sentence ruling, Lehman sued the Department in federal court.

In June 2024, U.S. District Court Judge David Lawson of the Eastern District of Michigan ruled in Lehman’s favor. Lawson found that the Biden administration’s Department of Labor had acted in an “arbitrary and capricious” manner, describing its reasoning as “pedantry,” “circular” and “post-hoc.” Bloomberg Law called the ruling “a rare rebuke of Labor Department’s role in policing unions.” Lawson remanded the case to the department and ordered the production of a substantive statement of reasons.

After Biden’s acting Labor Secretary Julie Su failed to act, Trump officials issued a 36-page document in November 2025 justifying every abuse committed by the UAW bureaucracy. It claimed that the UAW bureaucracy conducted “reasonable efforts” to ensure their members’ right to vote and claimed that no violations occurred that may have affected the outcome of the election.”

It is noteworthy that the list maintained by the UAW Monitor only contains the emails for 300,000 UAW members, far from all of the union’s 392,447 active members, let alone 580,000 retirees who are also eligible to vote.

In his letter Lehman states:

The nearly 5,000 votes my campaign received under those conditions expressed a growing demand for rank-and-file power. Rule changes for this election are designed specifically to make it harder for workers like

me to run. One member, one vote only has meaning if workers can vote for a candidate who is independent of the apparatus. Delegates have the power to take that stand. I am asking you to use it.

Lehman places the 2026 fight in the historical traditions of the union:

We are approaching the 90th anniversary of the Flint Sit-Down strike and the insurrectionary battles of the rank and file that led to the formation of the UAW. Whatever gains autoworkers and the entire working class have won were won through the rebellion of the rank and file. This is the challenge we confront today.

He advances a four-point program: abolish the bureaucracy and transfer power to workers on the shop floor; replace 45 years of “labor-management partnership” with a strategy of class struggle, including the restoration of pensions, a zero-layoff policy, and a 30-hour week at no loss of pay; build international solidarity uniting American, Canadian and Mexican autoworkers and defending immigrant workers against “Trump’s ICE gestapo”; and mobilize the industrial power of the union against police-state attacks and against the escalating global war.

Lehman calls on delegates to “take the side of the rank and file” and nominate him from the convention floor, and on every UAW member to press their delegates to do the same, talk to their coworkers and build rank-and-file committees independent of the bureaucracy.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**