United Auto Workers and United Steelworkers announce new deal at Dana, rush contract votes

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16 July 2026

Are you a Dana worker? Fill out the form at the end of this article for information on building a rank-and-file committee at your plant to fight for what workers need.

After keeping Dana auto parts workers on the job for more than a month without a contract, despite a decisive strike mandate by the membership, the United Auto Workers and the United Steelworkers are attempting to push through a hasty contract ratification vote on a new tentative agreement.

The just announced UAW/USW master agreement at Dana covers some 4,000 workers at 14 plants. Few details have been revealed, but according to information posted on Facebook, it would raise wages for most current workers to $30 an hour over the life of the 4-year contract, while expanding tiers and freezing new hire pay at $21 over the life of the agreement. To secure ratification, Dana is offering a larger ratification bonus and $700 retroactive pay to active workers.

There is no protection in the contract against layoffs that are sweeping the auto and auto parts industry, as employers use AI and automation to eliminate jobs and shift the costs of the loss of EV subsidies, tariffs and intensified global competition onto the backs of workers.

Some plants, such as Dana Driveline in Toledo, Ohio and Fort Wayne, Indiana, are scheduled to vote Friday, only one day after the contract rollout, where “highlights” not the full contract are being presented. This grossly undemocratic procedure prevents workers from fully reviewing and discussing a deal that will determine the conditions they work under for the next four years.

Campaigners for rank-and-file Mack Trucks worker Will Lehman, who is running for UAW president against Shawn Fain, visited the Dana plant in Warren, Michigan last week to speak to workers about their contract fight and the broader issues facing auto parts workers.

According to Lehman’s website, workers at Dana pointed to the grueling seven-day work schedule at the plant. Mandatory weekend work has been an ongoing issue at Dana. It factored into the overwhelming initial rejection by Dana workers of the 2021 contract.

“The union is for the company,” one veteran worker said. “If we walked out, we could shut down the whole auto industry. You need to sacrifice some time to get what you need.”

A young worker who takes a bus to work told campaigners, “It’s bad inside there. They preach safety but there is oil all over the floors. It’s hot in there now. They say they are fixing the roof to let in more air, but we don’t know if that’s going to do anything.”

Lehman is calling for the abolition of the UAW bureaucracy and placing power into the hands of workers on the shop floor through the building of a network of rank-and-file committees to unite workers across plants, industries and national borders in a common fight against the transnational corporations.

The Dana sellout follows a whole series of votes at auto parts supplier plants where the UAW imposed agreements over widespread and determined opposition.

At the Nexteer steering plant in Saginaw, Michigan, the UAW forced workers to vote four times on a concessions contract that they had already rejected. The fourth vote was held inside the plant under the intimidating eyes of management and UAW

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bureaucrats, conditions that call into question its validity.

At American Axle in Three Rivers Michigan, the UAW shut down a 10-day strike and quickly organized a contract ratification on the eve of the UAW Constitutional Convention in Detroit. Prior to the strike, the UAW sanctioned forced overtime allowing the company to stockpile axles and prevent any disruption of production at GM and other automakers. This stage managed operation allowed UAW President Shawn Fain, who is running for reelection this year, to posture as the leader of a "victorious" strike at the UAW Convention.

The Dana tentative agreement continues and expands the divisive tier system, imposing an extended 5-year wage progression, with the starting wage for new hires pegged at a poverty $21 an hour over the life of the contract. The USW agreement excludes workers at the Crossville, Tennessee Dana distribution center, whose top pay will be capped at $26 an hour. The issue of mandatory overtime and short workweeks remain unresolved.

Dana workers defeated a tentative contract in June. That deal would likewise have expanded the tier system, freezing new hire pay at $20 an hour and raised current workers to $28 over four years. Like the current deal, the proposal incentivizes management to target veteran workers to maintain a low-wage regime. Dana is notorious for its high turnover, firing workers for petty infractions, including critical social media posts.

As documented previously by the WSWS, this repressive workplace environment has been aided and abetted by the UAW bureaucracy, which has refused to defend victimized workers, such as workplace safety whistleblower Kamara Bond, a worker at the Dana Warren, Michigan plant who was fired twice for reporting dangerous working conditions on the shop floor.

As for the claims by the UAW that the $30 an hour wage by 2030 represents a "historic" achievement, inflation will negate a large portion of that raise. In real terms, $30 an hour is far less than workers earned at the Big Three car companies 20 years ago, including components workers at plants, such as Delphi and American Axle.

The *World Socialist Web Site* and the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) call on Dana workers to reject the sellout tentative agreement and fight for what they really need, including a significant upfront wage increase to make up for years of inflation and wage suppression and full cost-of-living protection, real enforceable job security, an end to forced overtime and weekend work, the abolition of tiers and the right to a pension.

For this, Dana workers must take the fight into their own hands by building rank-and-file committees independent of the UAW apparatus and under the democratic control of workers. These committees should fight for the broadest support among parts workers, workers at the auto plants and wider sections of workers.

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