

UAW official, who issued death threat against Will Lehman, fired from position after months of rank-and-file demands

Our reporters
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Raymond L. Jensen Jr., the United Auto Workers official who posted a death threat against rank-and-file socialist presidential candidate Will Lehman, has been terminated from his \$202,000-a-year position on the UAW International staff, Lehman reported Tuesday afternoon.

In a post on X, Lehman stated: “My attorneys have been informed by the UAW Human Resources Department that Raymond Jensen, the UAW official who issued a death threat against me, has been terminated from his position at the UAW International.”

Lehman continued, “This only happened because UAW members and workers throughout the world denounced this thuggery and demanded Jensen’s removal. But this was never about one bureaucrat. The entire UAW apparatus has to be abolished. This won’t be done by the UAW monitor or the courts. It is up to the rank and file.”

On July 16, Jensen, then an organizer in the UAW’s Department of Bargaining Strategy and formerly the assistant director of Region 9, Lehman’s own region, posted an AI-generated image on Lehman’s public Facebook campaign page. The image depicted Lehman bound with rope and gagged, blood running from his mouth, with a masked gunman aiming an automatic rifle at his back. Jensen, whose Facebook profile carried at the time an “I Support Shawn Fain” campaign badge, posted the image directly beneath a statement Lehman had issued on the federal criminal investigation of UAW President Shawn Fain.

From the outset, Lehman insisted that the threat was not aimed at him alone. “This threat is not aimed at me alone,” he stated. “It is an act of intimidation directed

against the entire rank-and-file opposition.” The image, he explained, was calculated to teach a lesson to every worker who has voted down a contract, spoken up at a meeting or thought about challenging the apparatus in their own local.

Lehman was not intimidated. He demanded that Fain and the UAW apparatus publicly repudiate the threat and remove Jensen from the payroll. Instead, the apparatus closed ranks. At the July 30 presidential candidates’ debate, when Lehman confronted Fain directly from the floor, the UAW president said, “I don’t condone that stuff,” before immediately adding: “If you’re running for president, get ready, brother, because you’ll be getting them every day.” No other UAW International official—including Richard Boyer, the International Executive Board member who was himself the target of Fain’s retaliation—issued any denunciation of the threat.

What forced action was not the apparatus but the rank and file. Workers throughout the UAW, disgusted by the thuggish behavior, rallied to Lehman’s defense. A young worker at Bridgewater Interiors in Detroit told Lehman’s campaign team, “They’re trying to shut you up. And they usually only do that when somebody’s telling the truth.” Support poured in from autoworkers at Stellantis Warren Truck and Sterling Stamping, from Nexteer and Dana workers, and from workers in Canada, Mexico, Britain, Australia, Türkiye and New Zealand who demanded Jensen’s removal.

It was only under these conditions that the court-appointed UAW Monitor, Neil Barofsky, took disciplinary action. On August 4, the Monitor stripped Jensen of his UAW membership for two years, barred him for life from holding union office, prohibited him

from campaigning for any candidate in this election, and required him to apologize to Lehman, after finding that the post violated the election rules' prohibition on threats, intimidation and reprisals.

But the Monitor left the question of Jensen's continued employment in the hands of the very apparatus on whose behalf the threat had been made. For an unspecified number of weeks, Jensen remained on the UAW International payroll, collecting his \$202,000 salary from the dues of the membership he had threatened. Lehman made an issue of Jensen's continued employment, warning that the inaction would only encourage further attacks. "If the apparatus is allowed to quietly retain him," he stated, "every functionary in the union will draw the obvious lesson: Threats against the rank and file carry no cost."

The statement from the UAW Human Resources Department, relayed to Lehman's attorneys, is the first confirmation that Jensen has been removed from the payroll. WSWs reporters left phone messages and sent emails seeking information on Jensen's status to the UAW International, to Region 9, and to Jensen's home local at the GM engine plant in Tonawanda, New York. No replies were received.

The firing of Jensen is a victory for the rank-and-file movement that forced it. The apparatus that produced the threat remains intact—an organization of hundreds of functionaries taking home six-figure salaries, which has presided over decades of concessions, plant closures and the victimization of workers who speak out. Its abolition is not a task for the Monitor or the courts. It is the task of workers themselves, organized in rank-and-file committees in every plant, university and workplace.



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