WHY I'M RUNNING FOR UAW PRESIDENT IN 2026



BY WILL LEHMAN
Mack Trucks worker and rank-and-file candidate for UAW president

My name is Will Lehman. I work at Mack Trucks in Macungie, Pennsylvania, and I am the rank-and-file candidate for president of the United Auto Workers. I was nominated at June's convention, and my name is on the ballot this year.

I'm asking you to vote for me—and to build a rank-and-file election committee in your plant to spread awareness about this campaign.

The purpose of this campaign is to spearhead a fundamental change in the organization, program, and strategy of the UAW:

First: To end the dictatorship of the Solidarity House bureaucracy over the union, purge the UAW of hundreds of parasitic union bureaucrats, promote the creation of a network of rank-and-file committees, and transfer power and decision making from the pro-corporate union apparatus to workers on the shop floor.

Second: To end the collaboration of the UAW with the corporations and re-establish the needs of the rank and file, not corporate profitability, as the purpose of the union. Forty-five years of pro-corporate policies must be replaced with a strategy of class struggle. Wages must be raised for all workers—including autoworkers, health care workers, academic workers and others in the UAW—to fully recover the losses caused by past concessions and raging inflation. Retirees must be assured of their economic security.

The UAW must adopt a zero-layoff policy and demand job security for all workers. Health insurance that covers all medical needs for workers must be provided at the company's expense. Job safety must be enforced by establishing rank-and-file control over working conditions and production standards. The historic demand for a 30-hour week, with no loss of pay, must be reasserted. Overtime must be voluntary, and compensated with triple the normal wage rate.

Third: To repudiate the reactionary chauvinism of the UAW bureaucracy. Workers have nothing to gain from a trade war, which amounts to a struggle among capitalists for control of markets and a greater share of profits gained through the exploitation of the working class. We need an international strategy uniting American, Canadian, and Mexican workers against the transnational corporations. The union must oppose the vicious persecution of immigrant workers, who are our class brothers and sisters. Without the multiethnic immigrant and first-generation workforce in the auto industry—and its traditions of solidarity and resistance—the confrontations of the mid-1930s that built the UAW would never have taken such a militant form.

Fourth: To mobilize the full and potential industrial and economic power of the union membership to defend democratic rights and oppose war.

THESE ARE NOT NORMAL TIMES

This is not a normal election, because these are not normal times. Workers across the UAW and throughout industry face a wave of mass layoffs driven by automation, speedup, and unsafe conditions. At the same time, the financial oligarchy

is responding to growing anger and resistance with violence, war, attacks on democratic rights and a drive to police-state dictatorship.

ICE agents roam our cities with a license to kill. In Minneapolis, Renée Good, a mother of three, and union brother Alex Pretti have been murdered. Trump, the frontman for Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos and other billionaires, is determined to set up an American version of Hitler's Third Reich.

We as workers must organize to defend our social and democratic rights—a decent standard of living, secure jobs, and safe working conditions. Workers are being maimed and killed on the job as corporations drive speedup, cut safety, and treat human life as disposable. The death of Ronald Adams Sr., crushed while performing maintenance work at a Stellantis engine plant, stands as a brutal indictment of a system that sacrifices workers for profit.

However, we cannot defend our lives and livelihoods while we are bound hand and foot by a union apparatus that works against us at every turn.

THE UAW IS A UNION IN NAME ONLY

As it is presently constituted, the UAW is a union in name only. It functions to isolate us, discipline us, and protect a privileged bureaucracy that is in bed with the companies and the government.

Consider some facts:

The UAW holds **$1.25 billion in assets**. By the union's most recent disclosure, the International employs around 1,000 people. Of those, nearly 470 take home over $100,000 a year. UAW President Shawn Fain is paid $276,000. The Secretary-Treasurer, Margaret Mock, makes $250,000. The three vice presidents average $245,000 each. And the eight regional directors average $232,000. At June's convention, they voted themselves even more —raises of $10,000 to $30,000 for each top officer.

These officials sit in the top 5 percent of US income earners. A regional director making $232,000 doesn't worry about rent, groceries, or whether their job disappears tomorrow.

Then there are the 500 to 600 "International Representatives"—the enforcement arm of Solidarity House. They make between $140,000 and $160,000 a year and function as high-paid industrial police who silence rank-and-file dissent.

Together, they consume **$90 to $100 million in payroll** a year. That's what the apparatus is defending—not us, not our jobs, not our safety, but its own income stream.

That money comes from the union's $1.25 billion war chest. **Over $850 million** is speculating on Wall Street in stocks, bonds, and mutual funds while workers live paycheck to paycheck. Another $300 million is in treasury securities and real estate, including Solidarity House and luxury resort properties.

This is a business model. And the workers are not the beneficiaries.

THE 2022 ELECTION AND THE FRAUD OF "REFORM"

In 2022, I ran for UAW president to give a voice to the rank and file. What happened in that election was a blatant suppression of democratic rights. Over 90 percent of UAW members didn't vote—because the leadership did everything it could to keep workers uninformed and out of the process.

Shawn Fain came to power promising "reform." But what have we gotten? Layoffs. Concessions. The "stand-up strike" that left most workers on the job. And now, the revelation of more corruption.

The truth is, this bureaucracy can't be reformed. It must be abolished. The union parasites who collaborate with management and the state must be removed, and the resources of the union must be taken out of their hands and placed under the democratic control of the rank and file.

WHAT THIS CAMPAIGN IS ABOUT

That's what this campaign is about. Not about getting me into some cushy office at Solidarity House—I'm not going to be moving there. I will stay on the shop floor. The aim of this campaign is not to replace one official with another, but to **abolish the bureaucracy and transfer power to the rank and file**.

We as workers have enormous power. Without us, nothing moves. The machines don't run. The trucks don't ship. The profits don't flow.

We have to use that power consciously—by getting organized.

This campaign will fight to spearhead the building of rank-and-file committees in every plant, warehouse, and workplace—independent, democratic organizations of workers that take decision-making power into our own hands. These committees will coordinate action, link up across job sites and industries, and prepare the basis for a real counteroffensive of the working class.

A SOCIALIST AND AN INTERNATIONALIST

I am running as a socialist and an internationalist. Socialism means a society run by the working class, not the billionaires, who profit off our exploitation. We must reject every attempt to divide us—by race, nationality, or ethnicity—and fight to unite workers across borders in a common struggle, for we all have the same interests and the same enemies.

I CANNOT FIGHT THIS BATTLE ALONE

Since I launched this campaign, the rank-and-file rebellion has only grown. Nexteer parts workers rejected three sellout contracts and voted 86 percent to strike, only to be ordered back to the line. Dana workers voted down concessions by huge margins, and American Axle workers walked out and were ordered back. At June's convention, the apparatus denied members a dues cut they were owed and buried nearly every resolution from the locals.

If we want to change anything, we have to fight, and I cannot fight this war alone. Winning the nomination was only the first step. The same apparatus that buried the 2022 vote will do everything it can to suppress this one.

So I'm calling on you—every member of the UAW—to get involved. Build a rank-and-file election committee in your workplace to spread this program and get out the vote, so every worker knows there's a real alternative on the ballot. Talk to your coworkers. Carry this campaign into every plant, warehouse, and campus. Organize a meeting with me, in person or online. This is how we keep them from suppressing the vote—and how we take our union back.

This year marks the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution, whose great declaration proclaimed that "All men are created equal" and entitled to "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness."

This principle is under attack. As the great Tom Paine wrote, "These are the times that try men's souls." The time has come to revive our revolutionary ideals.

JOIN THE FIGHT FOR WORKERS' POWER!

Get involved with the rank-and-file campaign in the UAW elections.

willforuawpresident.org/get-involved