THE ISSUE POSED AT THE 2026 UAW CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION: THE APPARATUS VS. THE RANK-AND-FILE



BY WILL LEHMAN
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The events of the first two days of the 2026 UAW Constitutional Convention have made clear why my nomination is necessary. This is a convention of the bureaucracy, by the bureaucracy, and for the bureaucracy.

While our brothers and sisters cannot pay their bills, the bureaucracy voted itself raises of $10,000 to $30,000 a year for each top officer. It is rewarding itself for the betrayals it has carried out.

At the same time, the apparatus moved to deny working UAW members a dues reduction they had been expecting for months. Under the existing constitution, when the strike fund crossed $850 million, dues were to drop from 2.5 hours of monthly pay to 2 hours. The fund crossed the threshold. The promised reduction never came. At this convention, the apparatus simply moved the goalposts: the ceiling was raised to $1.3 billion.

Meanwhile, strike pay for workers, already pitifully low, will only be raised by $50 a week.

The character of the proceedings makes a mockery of Fain's claim about reforming the apparatus. The whole event has been aimed at suppressing opposition to the bureaucracy that controls the UAW. Nearly 100 resolutions were submitted by local unions.

Of the proposals actually advanced, 35 came from the International Executive Board and only 4 came from local unions. There was not, in any meaningful sense, an actual agenda apart from what Solidarity House wished to ratify.

If the apparatus has its way, the convention will be nothing more than a coronation of the "Stand Up" slate. Fain brought former president Ray Curry to the podium as a guest of honor. Curry is the figure Fain ran against in 2022 and denounced as the "old guard" who had "sold out members with tiers, concessions, and plant closures" and "fought against one member, one vote." He has been welcomed back with open arms. Curry's people now sit on the slate alongside Fain's.

What does this unity consist of? It is the unity of the apparatus against the rank and file.

None of the critical issues confronting the membership have been subject to serious debate. The Nexteer rebellion — where workers have rejected three contracts and authorized a strike by 86 percent, only to be ordered by the apparatus to stay on the line — has been kept off the floor. The American Axle strike, called and then rapidly shut down by Solidarity House and now repackaged as a victory, has gone unexamined. Nothing has been said about the massive no votes by Dana workers. The 41-day Harvard strike of UAW academic workers, ended without a contract, has not even been mentioned.

The massive job cuts and victimization of rank-and-file workers have been passed over in silence. The unsafe conditions that killed UAW brothers Antonio Gaston, Ronald Adams Sr., and Gregory Knopf have gone unaddressed. The actual record of the Fain administration has not been examined. And the kind

of struggle that would be required to recover what has been taken from us over 45 years of concessions has not even been raised.

The bureaucracy fears that any open accounting will detonate the rank-and-file opposition that has been building plant by plant, workplace by workplace, campus by campus.

My campaign is about transferring power from the bureaucracy to the rank and file — to autoworkers, parts workers, academic workers, healthcare workers, and the retirees who built this union — through a network of rank-and-file committees in every workplace.

Today you will be asked to nominate the candidates for executive office. When you go home, your members will ask you what you did in Detroit. Will you say that you voted to maintain full dues for workers making $15 an hour while authorizing pay increases for the apparatus? Or will you say that you stood for building a popular rank-and-file movement to take back this union?

You have a chance to make a difference. Over the past two days I have spoken with many delegates who are outraged by what has transpired here and the state of the UAW. I urge every delegate of that mind to act on that conviction: nominate me, and nominate any candidate who is willing to take a stand for the rank and file against the apparatus.

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