# RAY CURRY AND SHAWN FAIN: STOP BLAMING WORKER APATHY FOR LOW TURNOUT CAUSED BY VOTER SUPPRESSION!



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*Will Lehman, 01/04/2023*

In the first round of the UAW officer elections, only 9 percent of members voted, with just 103,495 votes counted. After a long silence, both factions of the UAW bureaucracy—represented by Ray Curry and Shawn Fain—have spoken out about the fact that 1 million out of 1.1 million members did not vote. They both say that we, the rank-and-file workers, are to blame because of our "apathy."

In a December 30 interview in the *Detroit Free Press*, Ray Curry, who won less than 4 percent of the eligible membership's votes, called the turnout "unfortunate." Curry said that "there were 1.1 million ballots mailed to the convenience of someone's home and they got a choice of being able to make a decision on that." Those who did not vote, Curry said, "made a decision that they don't want to participate."

Echoing Ray Curry, the election slate headed by career UAW official Shawn Fain, Members United, has also sought to blame worker "apathy" for the turnout. Like Curry, Fain won the vote of less than 4 percent of eligible voters in the first round.

In a Twitter thread, Members United notes the low turnout and asks: "Why is our membership apathetic? Why do they not seem to care?"

Let me assure Shawn Fain and Members United that the rank and file, both active and retired, cares immensely about the fact that our wages and retiree payments are so low that we cannot keep up with inflation. We care about our co-workers who have died of COVID-19 and other unsafe working conditions while producing record profits for some of the world's biggest corporations. We care about the tier system. We care about the fact that the UAW leadership has spent decades forcing concession contracts on us and is now a part of management, accepting bribes from the companies and spending our dues money on liquor, expensive clothes and luxury hotels.

We care so much that we are willing to risk our livelihoods on strike, surviving on the paltry strike pay the UAW apparatus affords us in an attempt to sell us out. That's why 48,000 academic workers at the University of California were on strike last month, before the UAW leadership sold them out. That's why my co-workers and I were on strike at Mack Trucks in 2019, before the UAW leadership did the same to us. That's why 50,000 GM workers struck that same year, why 3,000 Volvo workers and 10,000 John Deere workers did so in 2021, and why CNH workers are still holding out in Iowa and Wisconsin today.

In case after case, the UAW apparatus has suppressed our struggles, strung us out and forced us to accept decades of concessions. That is the rank-and-file experience with the UAW leadership. Is it any wonder that many workers decided there was no point in changing the figurehead at the top of this massive bureaucracy?

But the low turnout was not primarily the product of workers deciding not to vote, as Curry claimed. The majority of workers never knew there was an election, because the entrenched UAW leadership did not want us to have a real chance to remove them from power.

In November, before the election concluded, I filed a lawsuit warning that turnout was on pace to be 10 percent or less and demanded an extra month be given for workers to vote. The UAW opposed this in court, and so did the Monitor. Two weeks ago, when the Monitor said there would be a runoff between Curry and Fain, I filed a formal protest demanding the Monitor not certify the first round. I presented evidence gathered by workers across the union

showing that the UAW apparatus deliberately suppressed the vote. I encourage all workers to read and share this protest widely.

In its Twitter thread, Shawn Fain's Members United also wrote: "Almost everyone in the UAW seems to be in agreement; there was a major voter turnout problem with the election last month." Almost everyone in the rank and file knows there was a massive violation of the right to vote, but no other candidate, including Shawn Fain, has raised a protest with the Monitor or agreed to support my campaign's call for the election to be rerun with actual notice provided to the membership.

Members United cites "obvious issues" with voting, including "out of date membership lists and members not receiving ballots. Without a doubt, these are processes that must be significantly improved."

As I outline in the protest I filed with the Monitor, many—probably most—workers never received ballots because the apparatus used the Local Union Information System (LUIS) to send them, a tool used by the bureaucracy to communicate with itself. A federal judge previously said this system "cut out the membership" by only compiling up-to-date addresses for the local and international officials but not the rank and file. There were more ballots returned to sender (110,000) than votes cast. The locals took almost no action to inform us an election was happening, and in some large locals in California and Washington turnout was under 1 percent.

But after admitting that it is "without a doubt" that the right to vote was violated and that many members never even received ballots, Members United wipes its hands, saying, "Let's go beyond the obvious issues." The real issue, they claim, is not the criminal voter suppression by the bureaucracy. On the contrary, the problem is that workers are "apathetic and disengaged" and no longer "believe" in the UAW apparatus. The solution, they say, is to "vote for Shawn Fain" in the runoff election so that his slate can "encourage [members] to get involved" in the union.

In other words, Members United says to rank-and-file workers: Even though your right to vote was violated, we won't fight to defend your rights. Accept the result of the fraudulent election. And this same group wonders why workers are so alienated from the bureaucracy.

In another Twitter thread, incoming Region 9A director and Members United member Brandon Mancilla also blamed workers for their "apathy" and wrote that the UAW apparatus needs "to repair those relationships" with the membership. What they're really talking about is giving the bureaucracy a facelift so that it can keep its hold on power and continue to suppress our struggles.

Workers do not need to "repair the relationship" with the bureaucracy, we need to abolish the bureaucracy and give power to the rank-and-file!

To defend our most basic democratic right to vote in a meaningful election, I am asking every rank-and-file worker to reject the legitimacy of the election which everyone knows was a fraud. Speak to your coworkers and read and share the results of my protest demanding the Monitor halt certification of the first round. Organize rank-and-file committees to defend the right to vote and demand a new election with real notice and all candidates' names on the ballot.

**JOIN THE FIGHT FOR WORKERS' POWER!**

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

**willforuawpresident.org/get-involved**