RANK-AND-FILE UAW PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE WILL LEHMAN SUES BIDEN ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT OF LABOR DEMANDING RE-RUN OF UAW ELECTION



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

Detroit, MI—On Monday, July 3, rank-and-file autoworker Will Lehman filed a complaint in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan challenging the Department of Labor's refusal to act on his complaint of widespread voter suppression.

Turnout in the first round of last year's UAW election was 104,776 out of a total eligible membership of 1.1 million (~9%), the lowest turnout in the history of any national union officers' election. Lehman filed the lawsuit after the Biden administration's Department of Labor (DOL) denied his protest over the election. In its three-sentence June 29 decision, the DOL refused to explain its decision to uphold the UAW election. The decision stated, "A statement of reasons setting forth the basis for this decision will be mailed to you at a future date."

Lehman's complaint alleges that the DOL decision was arbitrary and capricious and violates its obligation to protect the democratic rights of union members in union elections: "In the UAW's first-ever direct elections for national leadership, the entrenched bureaucracy systematically disenfranchised hundreds of thousands of rank-and-file members and retirees by deliberately failing to provide adequate notice that an election was taking place. To this day, many members are unaware that there was an election in which they had the right to vote."

Lehman's complaint continues:

> ***In the first round of voting, it took steps to inform its patronage network of local and national officials that an election was taking place, while simultaneously ensuring the smallest possible turnout among the rank-and-file. This strategy was reflected by the heavy reliance on the Local Union Information System ('LUIS') system to provide notice of the election, which was historically used only for communication between national and local officials.***

In November 2022, before voting in the first round concluded, Lehman filed a lawsuit in the Eastern District of Michigan warning of massive disenfranchisement and demanding that Judge David Lawson extend the deadline to vote and require the UAW take actions to notify the membership. During the 2022 lawsuit, Lehman warned, "If ballots continue to be sent at this rate each day through the November 28 deadline, total turnout will be roughly 104,000—almost 40,000 ballots fewer than last year's referendum." His prediction was accurate. Judge Lawson denied the lawsuit.

In a statement at the time of the filing of the July 3 lawsuit, Lehman said,

This lawsuit is for all 1.1 million members, regardless of who they voted for or whether they knew there was an election at all. In light of the overwhelming evidence of voter suppression and interference in the election by the UAW, the Biden administration's refusal to act on my complaint is a slap in the face to workers everywhere. This election was a fraud and the leadership that came to power as a result of it will be viewed as illegitimate unless the election is re-run with actual notice to all.

Contact Will Lehman

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