ABYSMAL TURNOUT IN UAW RUN-OFF CONFIRMS FRAUDULENT CHARACTER OF ELECTION



BY WILL LEHMAN
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The date for mailing ballots in the second round of the UAW election has passed, and only 136,114 workers have cast votes, according to the court-appointed Monitor's website. This equals to just 12 percent of the 1.1 million eligible active and retired members of the UAW. Though the number will increase slightly in the last days before the vote count begins March 1, this abysmal turnout confirms that this election is a fraud that does not reflect the democratic will of the membership.

The so-called "run-off" between Ray Curry and Shawn Fain is a contest between two career bureaucrats who both failed to win support from 4 percent of the membership in the first round. Only 9 percent of members voted in the first round, which concluded in November.

I am the only candidate from the first round who has refused to endorse either candidate of the bureaucracy. Instead, my campaign has demanded and campaigned for a re-vote in which actual steps are taken to notify the membership that an election is taking place.

The fact that only 12 percent of the membership has voted in the second round confirms everything in the official protest I filed to the Monitor in December demanding a re-vote with all candidates' names on the ballot. In my protest, I laid out evidence gathered by over 100 workers across the UAW showing how the UAW bureaucracy intentionally suppressed turnout in order to stop the rank-and-file from learning we had a chance to remove them from office.

Abysmal turnout in the run-off explodes the claim made by Ray Curry and Shawn Fain that low turnout in the first round was primarily due to worker "apathy."

The reality was the UAW bureaucrats systematically refused to inform their members that they had a right to vote, with only 10-15 percent of locals posting announcements on their Facebook pages or websites, and with almost no action taken to update the Local Union Information System (LUIS) to include workers' names, emails and physical addresses. On the West Coast, several academic worker locals at the University of California and University of Washington—comprised of tens of thousands of members—saw turnout of between 0.5 and 3 percent.

Workers in some locals report the UAW is taking steps to tell them about the election now that there are only two candidates who both represent the bureaucracy. This shows the locals could have taken additional measures in the first round, when there were more candidates, but refused to. This accounts for the slightly higher turnout this time, though turnout is still extremely low.

Two months have passed since I submitted my protest to the Monitor and they still have not issued a response, despite being obligated to under their own election rules. Though the Monitor has not even certified the first round yet, it is still powering through with a second round.

This is despite the fact that more and more evidence of voter suppression has emerged in recent weeks. It is now clear that the vast majority of UAW locals deliberately refused to update their LUIS system so that workers would not receive ballots or receive emails about the election.

In January, a former UAW member who was bargaining chair of Local 2320 filed an official protest with the Monitor exposing the fact that he received a ballot in the run-off despite changing jobs (and thereby leaving the UAW) over five years ago. Benjamin Brown said this showed that the UAW took no action to update LUIS since 2017. He explained that when he was bargaining chair, he protested to now-Region 9A Assistant Director Gordon Dean about the local's refusal to update its membership lists, and instead of taking action to update LUIS, Dean wrote Brown, saying he was "disappointed that you felt it necessary" to raise his concerns.

This protest was filed on December 21, but the Monitor has refused to issue a ruling on it.

In November 2022, another worker, Michelle Nadasky of Local 1264 in Sterling Heights, provided additional evidence that the UAW was refusing to update its systems. The Monitor admitted to Ms. Nadasky that the local had not updated LUIS, meaning that many workers did not receive ballots who should have. Now, after taking no action to address these concerns, the Monitor is presenting the run-off as "legitimate."

In November, I filed a federal lawsuit in the Eastern District of Michigan challenging low turnout. I asked the election be delayed a few weeks and for the UAW to be ordered to provide every member with notice that the election was taking place. Even the judge, who ruled against us, acknowledged that the LUIS system was never used to communicate with the membership, and was instead a tool by the bureaucracy to communicate internally, saying the LUIS system "kind of cut out the membership" from the election.

Regardless of which of the two bureaucrats squeaks into office, the UAW bureaucracy will remain entrenched, with its hundreds of officials who are paid over $100,000 to collaborate with the corporations and suppress our struggles. That will not change until we, the rank-and-file, build a movement to take power from them and return decision-making power and control of union resources to the workers on the shop floor.

But this will be a year of immense social struggles among UAW members and by workers in all industries in the US and across the world. Contracts are expiring at CAT in one week, and at the Big Three and Mack Trucks, where I work, later this year.

As the cost of living spirals out of control and as the ruling class spends billions of dollars escalating a war in Ukraine against nuclear-armed Russia, the rank-and-file must prepare for the next stage in our struggles by linking up across plants and across industries in a network of democratically controlled committees through which we can leverage our strength and overcome the domination of the union bureaucracies. I encourage every worker interested in joining this global movement to contact my campaign and join the International Workers Alliance for Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) today.

JOIN THE FIGHT FOR WORKERS' POWER!

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

willforuawpresident.org/get-involved