STATEMENT ON THE UAW ELECTION CRISIS BY RANK-AND-FILE CANDIDATE WILL LEHMAN



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

Brothers and sisters:

The conclusion of the second round of the UAW national officers' election has proven definitively that the election was a fraud conducted with contempt for the rights of the rank-and-file membership. As challenged ballots continue to be counted, Shawn Fain leads Ray Curry by just 505 votes, with only 12 percent turnout.

The narrow result and low turnout show Fain and Curry struggled equally to win votes beyond their own bureaucratic networks and that neither bureaucrat has significant support among the rank and file. In the runoff, although many locals actually took measures to notify workers of the election (they did not in the first round), Fain and Curry each won votes from only about 5 percent of the rank-and-file membership.

The election was a debacle for the UAW bureaucracy and has provoked a serious crisis.

On Thursday, Curry filed a formal protest demanding the court-appointed Monitor refuse to certify the election results over "rampant disenfranchisement" which "call the election into question and require immediate investigation."

Fain's campaign manager issued a statement saying concerns over the legitimacy and fairness of the election are "either false or irrelevant" and calling on the court-appointed Monitor and Department of Labor to certify the election and seat Fain as president. Brian Keller, who endorsed Fain in the runoff, called on workers to protest outside union halls demanding that no investigation be conducted into the election. "We need this election to be done today and we need Shawn Fain to be sworn in," Keller said.

The responses of Curry, Fain and Keller reveal the total contempt of the UAW bureaucracy and its defenders for the rights of the rank and file.

Curry's statement declares that the election is illegitimate and the result must be thrown out. This is not an allegation, it is an admission of guilt made by the perpetrator himself.

Curry now acknowledges that "tens of thousands" of voters were barred from voting by inadequate mailing lists and states that thousands upon thousands more workers were disenfranchised because they did not receive ballots even after calling the Monitor hotline for a replacement. Curry and his faction know this to be true because it was their plan from the start. Now they are saying it out loud in a last-ditch effort to retain control of the apparatus.

In November 2022, my campaign sued the UAW and the Monitor, warning that the election was a fraud and that the UAW was systematically violating the rights of the rank and file to cast meaningful votes in the election. I asked Judge David Lawson to extend the time to vote and order the UAW to take measures aimed at providing every member with notice that an election was taking place, including allowing members to vote in person at local union halls.

My lawsuit documented that the UAW bureaucracy deliberately withheld ballots from hundreds of thousands of members to deny us the chance to remove it from power. My campaign proved that the UAW used an internal email list (called Local Union Information System, or LUIS) that no rank-and-file worker has ever heard of to mail ballots. Even the judge said this "kind of cut out the membership."

Curry now admits I was correct. His statement asks a number of questions, including, "What efforts were made to contact UAW members who did not receive a ballot in the mail?" And, "Did voters who did not make multiple calls receive ballots?"

My campaign demanded the UAW, the Monitor, the US Department of Labor and Judge David Lawson answer each of these questions in open court before voting in the first round concluded. But the UAW apparatus under Curry,

the Monitor and the Department of Labor each *opposed* my request to extend the deadline and require the UAW take measures to notify the *entire*membership. Judge Lawson ruled against me and threw the support of the legal system behind an election that the UAW's sitting president now admits was an illegitimate fraud!

On December 20, after the first round of the UAW elections concluded with just 9 percent turnout, I filed a detailed protest establishing how the UAW bureaucracy suppressed the vote. I demanded the Monitor conduct a new election involving all candidates from the first round, except this time with actual notice to the entire membership.

The Monitor never issued an official response to my protest and did not certify the first round. But it proceeded to oversee the runoff as though nothing were amiss.

There is overwhelming evidence that the UAW bureaucracy systematically disenfranchised the rank and file. Despite this, Shawn Fain's campaign manager Nathan Pensler said yesterday that claims workers' rights were violated are "false or irrelevant," though he provided no evidence the election was fair. Referring to "concerns" over disenfranchisement, he said, "We are confident they will be dismissed by the Monitor, and, if necessary, the Department of Labor."

It is highly revealing that the Fain faction of the bureaucracy is fighting to take control of the UAW by condoning the bureaucracy's systematic violation the rights of the vast majority of rank-and-file members. Their conduct explodes their claim to represent a "reform" wing. Fain's opposition to giving rank-and-file workers a meaningful right to vote shows his faction is no different from Curry's in its hostility to the interests and democratic rights of rank-and-file workers.

As the two factions of the bureaucracy fight over positions and our dues money, their real concern is suppressing the movement of the rank and file.

In a statement published Friday evening titled "Former UAW President Bob King Opposes Any Delay in Finalizing UAW Election," King warned that any delay in certification would be "detrimental to the overall UAW membership and full preparation for the upcoming bargaining," adding, "It is in the best interest of the membership to swear in the next president whether that is Ray Curry or Shawn Fain before the Special Bargaining Convention," scheduled to meet the week of March 27 in Detroit. What King really means is that it is in the best interests of the auto corporations to ensure there is a "legitimate" leadership before the contract fight begins.

But whatever leadership emerges out of this rotten process will never be able to remove the stink of this fraudulent election, which proves that the corruption scandal was not the product of "a few bad apples," but of the pro-corporate relationship the entire UAW bureaucracy has maintained for decades at our expense.

Every day the rank-and-file members of the UAW confront urgent challenges: massive inflation, declining wages, increased production, the threat of unjust termination and unsafe working conditions. The experience of this election shows the UAW bureaucracy is an obstacle to our struggles, and that it will stop at nothing to violate our most basic rights.

To prepare for the fights ahead, workers must turn to one another through the formation of rank-and-file committees aimed at abolishing the UAW apparatus and giving power to the workers on the shop floor. That is what I fought for in my campaign and that is what we must fight for going forward.

Contact my campaign

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

willforuawpresident.org/get-involved