WILL LEHMAN SUBMITS OFFICIAL PROTEST CHALLENGING UAW ELECTION RESULTS AND VOTE SUPPRESSION



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

On Monday, December 19, Will Lehman, a Mack Trucks worker and candidate for United Auto Workers International president, filed a formal protest with the court-appointed UAW Monitor over the national UAW election results.

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Given the evidence of widespread suppression of voter turnout by the UAW bureaucracy, the election cannot be considered a legitimate expression of the will of the membership, and the results should not be certified, Lehman argues.

“This election was characterized by a deliberate suppression of the vote of the rank and file by the entrenched UAW leadership,” Lehman writes in the protest. “The union intentionally failed to provide adequate notice to the rank and file, who are not accustomed to direct elections and would not ordinarily expect to receive ballots. This fact is confirmed by the extremely low 9 percent turnout. Hundreds of thousands of members were simply unaware that an election was taking place and did not vote. In some locals representing tens of thousands of younger academic workers, turnout was less than one percent.”

On December 5, the UAW Monitor announced unofficial results from the UAW’s first-ever direct elections of its national leadership, which were held as the result of a years-long corruption scandal which sent more than a dozen top UAW officials to prison. The Monitor’s vote tally showed that only 103,495 ballots were counted, out of a total eligible voting membership of 1.1 million active and retired workers—a turnout of less than 10 percent, the lowest turnout by far for any direct union election.

Lehman’s protest submitted to the Monitor extensively documents, including numerous statements submitted by workers and data from other direct union elections, how the UAW apparatus systematically failed to inform workers of the fact that union elections were taking place, or took only the most minimal measures to do so. At the same time, the UAW went to great lengths to “get out the vote” for the Democratic Party in the run-up to the US mid-term elections, demonstrating that UAW had the means to inform workers of the union elections, but deliberately did not do so.

In November, Lehman had earlier filed a lawsuit in US District Court requesting that voting deadlines in the UAW elections be extended by 30 days and that serious measures be taken to ensure all workers were informed of the elections. The judge in the case, while acknowledging serious problems with the election procedure, dismissed the suit on narrow technical grounds.

To remedy the violation of workers’ democratic right to participate in a meaningful election, “ballots should be re-issued and a new election should be held,” Lehman states. “In the alternative, the names of all candidates should be added to the ‘runoff.’ In either case, this time adequate measures must be taken to prevent the union leadership from suppressing the vote and ensure that the entire membership is aware of the election and able to vote.”

"I urge workers in the UAW to read the full protest and to share it as widely as possible," Lehman added. "Contact my campaign and send us a statement supporting my challenge opposing the UAW bureaucracy's attempt to once again trample the rights of the rank and file. Let me know if you were unable to secure a ballot, or if you have other relevant information about efforts to suppress the vote."

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE. FILL OUT THE FORM BELOW.

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

willforuawpresident.org/get-involved