

Workers at GM ratify contract in win for US auto union

November 17 2023



Workers at General Motors approved a tentative agreement following a six-week strike earlier this fall.

Workers at General Motors have voted to ratify a new labor contract with sweeping pay increases, according to figures published Thursday, a

landmark step after a major auto industry strike this year.

About 55 percent of GM's hourly workforce endorsed the contract, according to figures published by the United Auto Workers, which had launched an unprecedented simultaneous stoppage of Detroit's "Big Three" in September.

The roughly six-week stoppage drew the attention of President Biden, who strongly endorsed worker demands and made history as the first US president to stand on a picket line.

UAW negotiators reached tentative agreements in late October with Ford, Stellantis and GM, setting the stage for [worker](#) votes on the pacts. Employees went back on the job after the tentative agreements were announced.

A parallel contract agreement also appeared headed for victory at Ford and Stellantis, where the "yes" vote led by a wider margin than at GM with some votes still outstanding. A final tally may not be released at Ford and Stellantis until early next week.

Under recently elected UAW President Shawn Fain, the union ordered a partial walkout at the three automakers on September 15, insisting that the companies significantly boost pay and benefits to make up for union concessions following the 2008 industry downturn.

Arguing that "record profits mean record contracts," Fain expanded the strikes multiple times, as the two sides drew closer to a deal.

Key elements of the deal included a 25 percent wage increase for hourly employees; guaranteed cost-of-living adjustments; an elimination of different pay levels or "tiers" that disadvantage junior employees; and a right to strike over plant closures.

While the agreements won widespread praise among labor pundits and academics, the vote of rank-and-file workers was closer than some expected.

In recent days, US media had focused on the possibility that the GM deal could be voted down after a majority of votes at some big company facilities went against the [contract](#).

Kate Bronfenbrenner, director of labor education research at Cornell's School of Industrial and Labor Relations, attributed the tightness of the [vote](#) to disappointment that the UAW did not win the reinstatement of pensions for junior workers, who will instead receive a 401-K as a retirement plan.

While Fain and other leaders won several significant victories, the pension matter had been a "key" issue, she said.

Bronfenbrenner said there are always some workers disappointed with the final deal after a lengthy strike.

Rank-and-file workers aren't "in the room" where negotiations take place and can't know when union leadership concludes they won't get a better offer, she said.

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Citation: Workers at GM ratify contract in win for US auto union (2023, November 17) retrieved 2 March 2024 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2023-11-workers-gm-ratify-auto-union.html>

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