

John Deere workers in US demand recount, full release of contract

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John Deere workers remain angry and suspicious three weeks after the United Auto Workers (UAW) and the farm and construction manufacturer announced the ratification of a new six-year labor contract agreement.

Only days after Deere and the UAW announced they had reached a deal, workers were forced to vote on the contract hours after reviewing its “highlights.” Workers have repeatedly demanded a recount and revote, and have since called for the contract to be released in its entirety. The UAW has responded to workers’ demands with silence.

The UAW had much to hide: the new contract preserves the hated two-tier system, increases out-of-pocket health care costs, and includes raises that amount to a few dollars an hour over six years after workers have suffered through years of stagnant wages.

The final results of the vote were never officially released. However, the *World Socialist Web Site* received a document from workers that stated the contract was passed by a margin of 180 votes.

A worker from Waterloo, Iowa wrote to the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter*, “It will be 3 weeks since the UAW and John Deere contract was ratified by 180 votes and we have not been given the actual contract to look at. All any of us have received is the HIGHLIGHTER. All of us still have a lot of questions! Just wondering what is inside that we (the members) still don’t know about. We need to call our Union Hall and DEMAND to see what is actually in the contract and not wait any longer.”

Speaking on the contract negotiations between Deere and the UAW, a worker from Davenport, Iowa said, “It was horrible. There should have been more transparency. At our meeting, my chairman said the two-tier wage had been eliminated. And then he came around and said in six years it will be. The pensions

and benefits are still higher for tier-one, and there are several other things they have we never got. These guys that are retiring now are getting \$3,000 or 4\$,000 a month, and my pension in 30 years will be \$1,100 when I retire. Our co-pays went up, we didn’t get crap.”

He added, “I think there should be a definite recount. I heard 2,500 people didn’t even vote. Only 7,500 or so voted. The union knows the numbers, not me. They only give you an hour to vote. What if someone has a funeral or other events going on?”

“I went to our union meeting, and the president only reported our local results. Someone asked him about the other locals, and he said he’s not reporting on other locals. I can tell if there’s stuff he’s gaining from all of this.”

“Why such a close call and in Waterloo why did they vote 66 percent ‘no’? Why would it be that far off at one plant? That right there is red flag. I saw an old chairman doing the counting I suspect. To see him sitting there, it just turned my stomach.

“Even if we had a recount or re-vote, would it matter? I don’t know. Because even if we had a recount, could we trust them?”

A worker from Dubuque, Iowa who was not informed of the final tally, said, “I haven’t even heard what the total was; everyone’s kept it secret. My local hasn’t been forward with anything.”

“Our local couldn’t post anything because it was up to the international to decide if we could reveal the information.”

However, after the *WSWS* informed him of the reported results, he commented, “If it was that close overall, they should consider a recount.”

Commenting on the UAW’s attempt to persuade workers to accept the contract, he said, “Everyone

keeps talking about how great the medical is, and yet my wife has been waiting to go to the Mayo Clinic for six months and still can't get an appointment. She's been to four doctors this week. It's unreal."

Denouncing the UAW's attempt to ram through the vote, he said, "I didn't like it being pushed down our throats. Even Chrysler, GM and Ford have more time to look at the good and the bad. I wanted time to look at it and talk to people about it before coming to a conclusion. People are livid."



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