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# UAW and Detroit Three must come to consensus

BY EDWARD MONTGOMERY

With the potential for a strike by the UAW against one or more of the Detroit Three just days away, both the UAW and the automakers have conveyed their initial proposals.

Now, it's time for all sides to acknowledge the magnitude of the challenge they are confronting in these negotiations and get down to the hard work of bargaining, trading offers, counteroffers, and the brass tacks of actual negotiations: finding areas of agreement and working constructively through differences.



Montgomery

The bargaining process needs this, but more importantly, the hard-working members of the UAW whose futures are at stake and the auto communities in Michigan and around the country deserve it.

As a member of President Obama's

Auto Task Force and leader of the White House Council for Auto Communities and Workers during the 2009 rescue of the auto industry, I know first-hand both the economic importance of this vital sector and the hard work and sacrifices that went into saving it.

In a true spirit of partnership, the UAW and the auto industry helped sustain some 7.25 million well-paying jobs that support workers and their families and build strong communities. This sector includes both the automakers, a network of suppliers and dealerships, and myriad local businesses that could be crippled by a prolonged strike, or worse — an unsustainable auto industry.

Those sacrifices more than 10 years ago set the stage for a revitalized, growing and highly competitive U.S. auto industry. Today, that means rising sales, initial success in the EV transition and the ability to offer rewarding compensation for workers with average gross pay for union members of approximately \$90,000 per year.

This pay, which is almost 50% higher than the median income in most areas where plants are located, helps support strong middle-class communities. Not only have workers been able to benefit today, but the Detroit Three have had sufficient capital to invest: \$120 billion in plants, people, and technology from 2013-2019, and another \$120 billion to fund the EV transition from 2020-2026, securing both their future and the future of UAW workers.

In short, U.S. auto manufacturing is in an incredibly strong position, but the challenge for the negotiators is far from simple as they must balance further rewarding UAW members for their efforts without choking the three automakers' ability to invest, compete, and remain a stable employer. The contract proposals we have seen now provide a pathway to getting there — with automakers accepting they need to raise compensation and provide further employment opportunities and reassurances during the continued EV transformation.

It appears that both sides agree auto workers deserve fair raises and sustainable incomes. Auto workers have worked hard to make the industry profitable and played a critical role in its recovery; they should benefit from better company performance.

Sustainable compensation must both provide for the workers and allow the companies to compete in the marketplace today and in the future. The automakers must be able to compete with non-union companies like Tesla or foreign transplants. The likely winner from a failed U.S. auto industry would be Chinese manufacturers, who already produce 60% of global electric vehicle sales, or other non-union competitors.

We need both sides to start negotiating in earnest instead of throwing verbal bricks or saber rattling about a strike which is in no one's interests. The economic domino effect of a strike could be enormous — a three-company strike would cause an estimated loss to the economy of more than \$5 billion after just 10 days, according to

a study from the Anderson Economic Group.

The auto workers themselves could see wage losses totaling \$859 million, and the approximately 700,000 supplier jobs supported by the Detroit Three would be in peril.

Back in 2008-2009, when jobs and shared prosperity were on the line, making the right decisions at the right time paid off. I am hopeful that, as the three automakers and UAW exchange specific contract proposals over the coming days, a seriousness of purpose and constructive resolve takes hold.

UAW negotiators should bargain hard to ensure they are rewarded and compensated for their many contributions. But that bargain should not come at the expense of the industry's future nor at the expense of future job security for UAW members.

Edward Montgomery is president of Western Michigan University. He was a member of President Obama's Auto Task Force and led the White House Council for Auto Communities and Workers. He occasionally consults for certain auto manufacturers.

## Detroit needs mental health solutions now

Numerous studies and reports have shown that the COVID-19 pandemic took a toll on mental health. Now, Detroit is becoming the epicenter of the crisis.

The city is witnessing a mental health debacle and there doesn't seem to be an answer for how to deal with it.



BANKOLE THOMPSON

Just last week, a woman at the top of a building on the city's east side took her own life after hours of failed negotiations with police trying to calm her down. That is one example of several cases involving mental health calls that Detroit Police Department have been dealing with in the recent months. Perhaps it helps that police Chief James White is a trained mental health professional who brings an educated understanding to the depth of the problem and what kinds of resources are needed.

And that begs the question: Does Detroit have an effective strategy for confronting the mental health crisis it faces and bringing it under control?

One would think the question belongs to the taxpayer-funded Detroit Health Department.

But not according to John Roach, the spokesman for Mayor Mike Duggan, who said the health department doesn't have jurisdiction over addressing mental health issues. If that's truly the case, Detroit needs to change course now.

Officials at City Hall don't have to wait until they are campaigning for reelection to put a plan together to tackle the problem.

Roach referred all of my questions to the Detroit Wayne Integrated Health Network, the mental health authority whose tentacles expand beyond the city itself. The health department according to him only conducts education and outreach support for DWIHN. He pointed to a recent partnership that would provide training for officers in crisis intervention

situations.

"We understand there is a mental health crisis in the city and Wayne County and our hearts go out to the family and the community as we deal with another loss of life," said the authority's president and CEO Eric Doeh. "DWIHN continues to remain steadfast in providing free suicide prevention and mental health first aid training to the community as well as working continuously with the Detroit Police Department in training officers on how to respond to mental health calls."

He added, "DWIHN has also trained clinicians in the 9-11 call center assisting officers with mental health calls. In October, it will launch its mobile units which will be equipped to manage crisis calls in communities and neighborhoods."

Since taking over the mental health authority, Doeh, known to be a straight shooter, has rescued the once troubled agency and turned it around into a trusted public entity.

But the city's own health agency should demonstrate leadership over this issue as well.

"DWIHN is transforming its current location on Milwaukee Avenue, in the heart of the New Center area in Detroit, into a Crisis Care Center. This will be a facility where adults and adolescents can receive short-term crisis intervention services. It will add 36 beds to the Crisis Continuum and will be a 24-hour Clinical Care Center. The center will be completed by winter 2023," Doeh said.

What good is the Detroit Health Department if it has no answers or solutions for what Detroit police officers are dealing with in the streets? Health Department Director Denise Fair Razo should be busy right now lobbying lawmakers in Lansing for substantial funding to deal with the mental health epidemic, especially considering legislators are authorizing funding for so many wrong priorities.

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 Bankole Thompson is a columnist for The Detroit News. His column appears on Mondays and Thursdays in the newspaper.



Joshua Bessix

This is the kind of comprehensive, layered partnership that students deserve, the authors write.

## Literacy partnerships can lessen learning gaps

BY CINDY EGGLETON, ADEOLA WHITNEY AND MICHELLE TORGERSON

With the school year starting, an innovative partnership between national reading programs and a grassroots-based community organization was forged to ensure Detroit youth and families had the opportunity to experience the joy of reading.

At the beginning of summer break, Brilliant Detroit, Raising a Reader, and Reading Partners teamed up with other existing organizations to offer literacy support to students and families across the city.

Brilliant Detroit already had families within its program looking for extra literacy support for their kids, Raising a Reader was looking to extend the reach of their summer learning program, and Reading Partners wanted to expand its evidence-based literacy tutoring to prepare more kids for the school year ahead.

So, bringing three pieces of the puzzle together, Reading Partners and Raising a Reader joined "Detroit Reads!," which is Brilliant Detroit's citywide initiative to combat summer learning loss.

This is the kind of comprehensive, layered partnership that students deserve.

Brilliant Detroit has created 18 community hubs, where children have everything they need to succeed in school and life. The hubs are deeply connected to each family and are able to support students logging into literacy tutoring sessions on Reading Partners Connects, an online tutoring program run by AmeriCorps members fresh off a year-long service term.

After their tutoring session, students can take home one of the many books provided by Raising a Reader to continue working on their literacy skills.

Why is this partnership so vital to Detroit's students?

For decades, millions of students have expe-

rienced a "summer slide," or a decline in academic skills and knowledge gained over the previous school year. But the disrupted learning caused by COVID exacerbated this learning loss, leaving students on average four to six months behind in their learning.

Students of color and students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds experienced even greater learning loss. These students tend to have fewer resources available to them in their schools and communities, like high-quality tutoring, inclusive and diverse books, or important summer programming.

All students deserve to have the opportunity to learn. And in order to excel in school and beyond, they need foundational literacy skills.

Curriculums typically shift from learning to read to reading to learn between third and fourth grade, and keeping up with lessons in other classes becomes increasingly challenging for students who aren't reading at grade level by then. At a time when literacy skills are at lows not seen since the '70s, summer learning, and specifically summer reading, is integral to a student's education journey.

With over 400 families in the program, students have been strengthening their literacy skills and preparing for the school year ahead. And the partnership won't end there. Reading Partners and Raising a Reader plan to continue working with Brilliant Detroit throughout the school year to support even more students.

Addressing the nation's literacy crisis doesn't have one simple solution. What we need is an interconnected, mission-aligned, equity-focused web of support, like the one implemented in Detroit this summer.

Cindy Eggleton is co-founder and CEO of Brilliant Detroit.

Adeola Whitney is CEO of Reading Partners. Michelle Torgerson is president and CEO of Raising a Reader.

## COVID shouldn't be politicized

"Outta' my mind on a Monday moanin'"

Today is September 11. Many of us will never be able to think of 9/11 as just another day in September, no matter how much time passes.

■ "Here we go again!"

Here's to hoping the medical community and more importantly, our government, remembers the lessons learned the first time we experienced COVID.

We should now know what to do, and maybe more importantly, what NOT to do this time around.

Ohio Sen. JD Vance has introduced a bill aimed at preventing federal mask mandates. He calls it the "Freedom to Breathe Act" and it would ban federal agencies from requiring face masks in schools, on airplanes or public transit through the end of 2024.

Sen. Vance says mask mandates, "failed to control the spread of respiratory viruses; violated basic bodily freedom and set our fellow citizens against one another."

It's that last part that I hope and pray we avoid next time around, if indeed we are headed to a next time. Let's not politicize medical circumstances ever again.

There are many people who will not be interested in getting the new booster, but there will be some who can't wait to get it. There are some who wouldn't be caught dead with a mask on, and some who wouldn't think of venturing out anywhere without one.

At this point, to each his own. Neither decision should be a political decision.

■ It's time to "dress up and show up" to support our local community, both the auto industry and six children's charities.

Join me at Huntington Place this Friday for The North American International Detroit Auto Show Charity Preview. To see fabulous cars and Jennifer Hudson perform, go to: [naias.com/charity-preview-tickets](http://naias.com/charity-preview-tickets).

Paul W. Smith is host of "Focus" on WJR-AM (760) from noon to 2 p.m. Monday-Friday.



PAUL W. SMITH