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**INTERNATIONAL UNION, UNITED AUTOMOBILE, AEROSPACE & AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENT WORKERS OF AMERICA – UAW**

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VICE-PRESIDENTS: JOE ASHTON • CINDY ESTRADA • GENERAL HOLIEFIELD • JIMMY SETTLES

**(E-mailed)**

November 30, 2011

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

During my forty-three years in the UAW, I have had both the honor and privilege to serve the membership in various leadership positions -- from the plant level, to my current role as Vice President and Director of the National Ford Department. Throughout my career, I have experienced countless occasions in which the UAW memberships' actions have exceeded even my highest expectations and reinforced the pride I have in our union. Perhaps none more so than last month's contract ratification. It was truly an eye-opening experience.

It is almost impossible to express in words how rewarding it was to witness nearly 86% of our members taking an active role in their union by exercising their right to vote. Particularly given the backdrop of voter apathy in our country, where so many choose to forego their most fundamental right.

Nevertheless, our members rose to the occasion, and showed the nation (and believe me the nation was watching) that union members are active and prominent leaders in their communities. Moreover, we proved that we embody the entire American dream, and we take our responsibilities very serious.

I was especially proud of our members at Local 249 in Kansas City. The brothers and sisters of KCAP were diligent and steadfast in their democratic process. For four hours, I watched as 92% of Local 249's members piled into a high school gymnasium, on a Sunday afternoon, in 80-degree weather, causing a traffic jam along Interstate 435. In addition, these members were passionate, informed, and ready to cast their votes. I take my hat off to President Jeff Wright and Plant Chairman Todd Hillyard for their leadership, and to the entire Local 249 membership.

However, Local 249 is not alone; our members and leadership across the country each played a critical role during the ratification. While it was not possible for me to be at every location, the entire process has rekindled my spirits and reenergized both my staff, and myself moving forward.

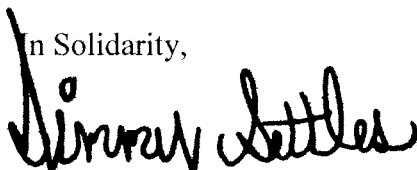
Even at locations that voted against the contract, the energy displayed by those members, by some of the most vocal opponents, is something I embrace. We cannot run from our differences, nor should we try to drown out those who offer a different perspective. Instead, we should take every opportunity to learn and teach; and we learned a lot about one another during this process, and we still have much more to learn.

I am also proud of the way we improved and expanded the ways in which we communicate with the membership. Our transparency throughout negotiations and our use of social media and other technologies during the ratification was both innovative and effective in keeping our membership informed. The National Ford Department took the lead in this regard, because we recognized this is a new era for our union and embracing new methods of communication with our members, especially many of our younger members, is the only way for our organization to survive and grow.

Now it is time to move forward, to expand upon our unionism and reestablish core union values in our country. We can do this by remaining active in our neighborhoods, and finding new opportunities to engage with our neighbors so they can learn firsthand the significance of being a card-carrying union member. It goes without saying that our future depends entirely on our willingness to embrace our roles as our brothers and sisters keeper.

It is crucial that we reconnect with the public in advance of the 2012 Presidential elections. We must work together, each of us to defend the rights of working men and women, and be hands-on in the fight to elect pro-labor candidates to every office from the White House to our local and state government.

I encourage each of you to work with your respective Regional Director and be an active participant in the 2012 campaign. I am confident that if we continue to display the same passion and enthusiasm as we did during the ratification process, there is no challenge we cannot overcome.

In Solidarity,  
  
Jimmy Settles  
Vice President and Director  
UAW National Ford Department

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