

Shawn Fain for VP!

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In the short term, we are often caught between our dreams and realism. But there is a chance right now to offer a suggestion for the Democratic Party's vice-presidential pick that would be both inspiring and eminently practical, namely, Shawn Fain, president of the United Auto Workers.

Everyone understands that the Democrat's presidential hopes depend on winning back the white working class. Sanders and others are certainly right that this requires an emphasis on the parts of the Democratic platform that work to reduce the huge inequalities that plague our country. It also requires, however, a vice-presidential candidate that can convince voters that Democratic promises will not be ignored after the election. Political insiders understand this and that's why they are looking for a candidate who might appeal to these voters. But each of the names being bandied about as part of the "short list" in fact has serious handicaps.

Josh Shapiro is the governor of Pennsylvania. In the words of the *New York Times* "The Morning Briefing," "perhaps Shapiro's biggest downside is that he could inflame divisions between moderate and liberal Democrats over the war in Gaza." Senator Mark Kelly would, if he won, "trigger a special election in Arizona in 2026, potentially costing Democrats a Senate seat." Michigan's Gretchen Whitmer says she doesn't want the job. Andy Beshear from Kentucky doesn't offer the Democrats an extra state in the win column. And Gov. Cooper of North Carolina has the problem that every time he leaves the state to campaign, his lieutenant governor, a very conservative Republican who is running for governor, becomes the acting governor.

Shawn Fain would electrify working class voters. He would thrill volunteers. He would be able to draw a sharp contrast between the fascistic faux populism of Trump and Vance and real pro-labor policies. As the leader of the historic UAW strike victories last year, there is no mistaking which side he is on. He has called for a general strike in 2028. And in May, he declared:

"The UAW will never support the mass arrest or intimidation of those exercising their right to protest, strike, or speak out against injustice. Our union has been calling for a ceasefire for six months. This war is wrong, and this response against students and academic workers, many of them UAW members, is wrong. We call on the powers that be to release the students and employees who have been arrested, and if you can't take the outcry, stop supporting this war."

But yet, Fain and the UAW endorsed Biden. Biden walked on their picket line. (In 2019, so did Harris.) So he is not so far beyond the pale that his selection would be inappropriate on a Democratic Party ticket. And when Donald Trump at the Republican convention called for Fain's firing, he placed the union head in the national spotlight. Think of how Fain's comments on Trump would resonate on the campaign trail:

“Donald Trump is a scab. Donald Trump is a billionaire and that is who he represents. If Donald Trump ever worked in an auto plant, he wouldn’t be a UAW member, he would be a company man trying to squeeze the American worker.”

Executive experience? He has run an organization of more than 400,000 members. Foreign policy experience? He doesn’t have much - but only Kelly on the list above does - and he’s been involved in trade issues, recently named to Biden’s Export Policy Council. Speaking ability? As Axios commented, “Fain speaks with the cadence and tone of an old-school preacher, calling on the world to embrace the UAW’s ‘righteous’ cause, referencing biblical heroes like Moses, and telling people to ‘stand up’ for justice.”

Shawn Fain is an outside-the-box choice. A few other commentators have mentioned him as a possibility. He ought to be on everyone’s short list.

And he ought to be the next vice president of the United States.