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Trib editorial: Unions' embezzlement problems

TRIBUNE-REVIEW (MAILTO:OPINION@TRIBWEB.COM?SUBJECT=RE: TRIB EDITORIAL: UNIONS' EMBEZZLEMENT PROBLEMS STORY ON TRIBLIVE.COM) |

Friday, Jan. 12, 2018, 8:57 p.m.



Alleged illicit diversion of millions of worker-training dollars by United Auto Workers and Fiat Chrysler officials in Detroit grabs headlines. So does a multimillion-dollar New Jersey case involving health-insurance fraud, theft and a former UAW president. But these cases targeting unionized workers' money are just the revolting tip of a decaying iceberg.

The Detroit Free Press reports U.S. Labor Department documents "show embezzlement from hundreds of union offices nationwide over the past decade," with cases at 300-plus union locations resulting in charges in just the past two years. And the UAW is hardly alone: The cases "involved unions representing nurses, aerospace engineers, firefighters, teachers, film and TV artists, air traffic controllers, musicians, bus inspectors, bakery workers, roofers, postal workers, machinists, ironworkers, steelworkers, dairy workers, plasterers, train operators, plumbers, stagehands, engineers, electricians, heat insulators, missile range workers and bricklayers."

The cases occurred "in big cities and tiny towns in all corners of the country." They typically involved local union bookkeepers, presidents or treasurers, with the stolen money "frequently" used "to buy luxury items."

Rank-and-file members must question how their unions safeguard their money. Officials must bolster unions' financial controls. And all must press for a Pennsylvania right-to-work law ensuring real choice about unionized employment.