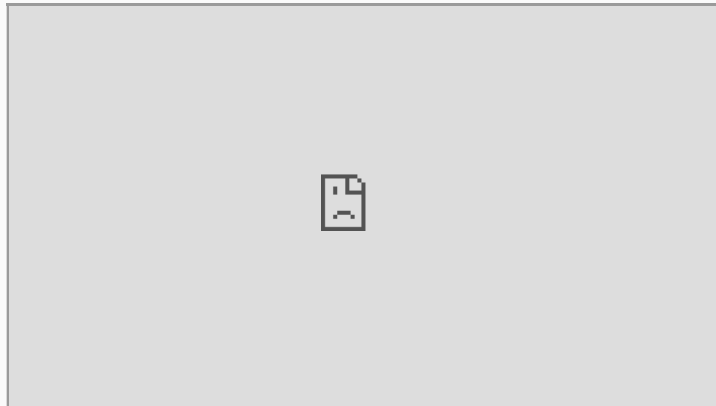


UAW says Elon Musk tweet violates federal labor law

Phoebe Wall Howard, Detroit Free Press



Elon Musk criticized the news media for what he described as irresponsible reporting and suggested he would launch a website to assess the legitimacy of reporters. Time

 **Elon Musk**

(Photo: Paul Sakuma, AP)

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Tesla CEO Elon Musk may be feeling stress from a

failing production schedule, but that's no excuse for tweeting threats that violate federal labor law, UAW President Dennis Williams said Thursday.

"I'm sure he's under a great deal of pressure," Williams told reporters at a roundtable in Detroit. "But we filed charges."

The legal action followed a tweet from Musk sent at 2:44 a.m. May 21:

"Nothing stopping Tesla team at our car plant from voting union. Could do so tmrw if they wanted. But why pay union dues & give up stock options for nothing? Our safety record is 2X better than when plant was UAW & everybody already gets healthcare."

UAW lawyers submitted an official complaint with the National Labor Relations Board against the high-tech automaker based in Fremont, California, for violating a federal law that prohibits companies from punishing employees who unionize.


Tesla already is facing multiple state and federal investigations involving crashes and worker injuries. The Free Press obtained the NLRB complaint that outlined the allegation that Musk threatened to "take away employee stock options in retaliation for Tesla employees engaging in protected union activity."


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The UAW cites the tweet in its complaint, which mentions Musk has 21.8 million Twitter followers, the tweet was widely shared and covered in the media and that it remains online.

Musk's tweet was "a threat to the workers and a direct violation of the Labor Act," Williams said. "I don't know what the hell Musk is up to — sometimes I scratch my head. He's a very bright man, no doubt about it. He's very creative, no doubt about it. But the comments that he made were so ridiculous the other day. I mean you've got to be kidding me."

The labor leader marveled at the "derogatory" tweets from Musk targeting the UAW.

On May 22, Musk tweeted the UAW "drove GM & Chrysler to bankruptcy & lost 200,000+ jobs for people they were supposed to protect ... UAW destroyed once great US auto industry & everyone knows it."

Williams laughed and said, "As if we controlled Wall Street and collapsed the whole industry. The one thing the UAW does not do is close plants."

On May 22, Musk tweeted, "They want divisiveness & enforcement of 2 class 'lords & commoners' system. That sucks. US fought War of Independence to get *rid* of a 2 class system! Managers & workers shd be equal w easy movement either way. Managing sucks btw. Hate doing it so much."

The growing UAW, which represents 430,000 members nationwide, is officially called "The International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America." It represents automotive workers, casino dealers, college teachers, agricultural equipment manufacturers and aerospace engineers.

About 40% of UAW members work outside the auto industry. The UAW represents nearly 7,000 postdoctoral researchers on 11 University of California campuses alone.

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While Tesla is tangling with the UAW publicly, the company stands to benefit profoundly from a policy proposal that Williams praised on Thursday: President Donald Trump's proposed tariff on foreign-made autos.

Michelle Krebs, executive analyst at Autotrader, said of all automakers domestic and foreign, "Tesla would be hurt the least by tariffs" since it's the only carmaker that builds exclusively in the U.S.

John McElroy, a TV host and longtime auto industry observer, said Tesla could see incredible benefit.

"A tariff would raise the prices of all the German imported electric cars and that would give Tesla a real competitive advantage in the American market," he said. "Look, GM and Ford and everyone import all kinds of vehicles from all over

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the world. So if Trump raises the tariffs, that's going to hurt every single car company. Tesla is the only one that only makes cars in the United States. None of the prices of its cars will go up, But the prices of its competitors will."

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