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## UAW Members Mourn Passing of General Holiefield

03/10/15



For immediate release: Tuesday, March 10, 2015

DETROIT – General Holiefield, who served two terms as vice president of the union’s Chrysler Department, passed away March 9.

“Our union mourns the passing of the gentle giant and tireless activist for working women and men everywhere,” said UAW President Dennis Williams. “General was a dedicated trade unionist who helped UAW members at Chrysler through the dark days of the auto crisis when we were not sure the company or the industry would survive. He demonstrated tremendous insight and leadership through that period of uncertainty.”

In November 2013, Holiefield announced that he would not seek a third term and would retire at the union’s 36th Constitutional Convention in Detroit last June. Previously he had been elected to a second term as a UAW vice president at the UAW convention in 2010. He directed the union’s Chrysler, Heavy Truck and General Dynamics

departments.

Upon his retirement, Holiefield said, “I leave with very cherished memories of more than 40 years as a member and leader of this great union. My goal has always been to lift people out of poverty and to give them a better standard of living and that goal has been reflected in my work with the UAW, an institution that reflects the same goal. I have enjoyed my time with the members, my co-workers and staff, Bob King and others on the union’s International Executive Board. I will always be a part of this union. I will always leave the light on.”

Holiefield joined the UAW in 1973 when he went to work at Chrysler’s Jefferson assembly plant in Detroit. In 1975, he transferred to Chrysler’s axle plant on Detroit’s lower East Side, where he quickly became active in UAW Local 961, working on various standing committees, including the Civil Rights, Community Action Program (CAP), Union Label, and Bylaws committees.

Recognizing his activism and leadership skills, Local 961 members elected him to serve as their chief steward in 1987. He was elected vice president of his local union in 1990, and became president two years later when his predecessor retired. In 1992, he was elected by his local union members as a delegate to the UAW’s 30th Constitutional Convention. In 1993, his local’s members elected him president and bargaining chair by acclamation.

Holiefield was appointed to the UAW International staff in 1995 by then-President Stephen P. Yokich and assigned to the union’s Chrysler Department, then directed by Vice President Jack Laskowski. As a servicing representative, he worked closely with UAW members and local union leaders at Chrysler manufacturing and parts plants in Michigan and Indiana.

In 1997, Laskowski promoted Holiefield to the position of appeals board coordinator, with responsibility for handling arbitration cases for the union’s Chrysler Department.

In 1999, Vice President Nate Gooden named Holiefield as an assistant director of the union’s DaimlerChrysler Department, and promoted him to administrative assistant in 2002.

In 2004, then-UAW President Ron Gettelfinger appointed Holiefield as his top administrative assistant, the union’s top staff position. He was the first African-American to serve in that capacity.

A longtime political and community activist, he was a member of the Michigan Democratic Party, a life member of the NAACP, as well as a board member of the NAACP’s national board of directors, a member of the UAW Legal Services Board and the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU).

“His contributions to the union and working men and women throughout the UAW and everywhere are impacted every day and will not be forgotten,” Williams said. “Our thoughts and prayers are with General’s family and friends.”

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