

Amazon girds for challenge in warehouse union drive

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Amazon workers at an Alabama warehouse have been given a green light by a federal agency on a unionization vote which could deliver a first for organized labor with the e-commerce and technology giant in the United States.

The National Labor Relations Board said Thursday it found "sufficient showing" to allow for a vote among workers at the Amazon distribution center in Bessemer, Alabama.

The decision this week suggests a large number of the workforce at the facility—which opened with 1,500 workers but now has more than 5,000—signed cards in support of the union drive by the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union.

Amazon and the union were given until Friday to work out details of the vote. If no agreement is reached, the NLRB would begin a hearing to set a date and terms for the balloting.

A successful drive would mark a first for Amazon, which has so far avoided union drives for its US operations. It has more than one million employees worldwide, with a majority in the United States.

An Amazon spokesperson said the latest union effort lacked support from a majority in Bessemer, while noting that it offers above-average wages and benefits.

"We don't believe this group represents the majority of our employees' views," Amazon spokesperson Heather Knox said in a statement.

"We work hard to support our teams and more than 90 percent of associates at our Bessemer site say they would recommend Amazon as a good place to work to their friends."

Traditionally, the NLRB will authorize a vote when at least 30 percent of a labor force signs [union](#) cards. But it was unclear exactly how many of the Bessemer employees supported the effort.

The move comes amid a series of protests around the United States on safety and working conditions with the coronavirus pandemic increasing pressure on Amazon's distribution network. The company has maintained that it has invested billions in [worker](#) safety even as it has boosted the number of its employees.

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