

Amazon to fight union's win in NY labor election

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Organized labor backers celebrate following the April 1, 2022 vote to unionize the Amazon Staten Island warehouse in New York.

Amazon told a federal agency it will file "substantial" objections to last week's worker election in New York that established the company's first

union in the United States, according to a filing released Thursday.

In a letter to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), the retail giant requested more time to compile and present evidence about alleged problematic election conduct on the part of the union and the board's officials.

"This election involves more than 8,300 eligible voters, and voting spanned over 50 polling hours," Amazon attorneys with the firm Hunton Andrews Kurth said in a motion to the NLRB.

"It is simply infeasible for Amazon to sufficiently investigate the myriad of objectionable conduct within five business days."

The NLRB granted Amazon until April 22 to present proof, but the company still must file its objections by Friday night, an official said.

On April 1, more than 55 percent of the votes at the Staten Island, New York JFK8 warehouse sided with Amazon Labor Union (ALU), handing the bootstrap labor organization a surprise victory that has cheered the American labor movement and drew kudos from President Joe Biden.

The filing accuses union backers of intimidating workers, and said the NLRB administration of the vote led to "inordinately" long wait times that depressed turnout.

But the document did not provide evidence of these allegations, saying the company needed more time "to further compile, review and outline evidence" to support the claims.

Eric Milner, an attorney representing ALU, dismissed as "absurd" Amazon's complaints.

"The employees have spoken and their voices have been heard," Milner told AFP.

"Amazon is choosing to ignore that, and instead engage in stalling tactics to avoid the inevitable; coming to the bargaining table and negotiating for a contract on behalf of the fulfillment center associates at JFK8."

Meanwhile, organizers of an effort to form a union at an Amazon warehouse in the Alabama city of Bessemer on Thursday accused the company of interfering with a vote there that was still up in the air.

The vote is a redo of a 2021 ballot thrown out by federal officials in which 993 workers cast ballots against the labor group, compared with 875 employees in favor.

But there were 416 "challenged" ballots, according to the NLRB, meaning the number of votes still to be settled is big enough to potentially decide the final result.

The Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union backing the Bessemer campaign asked the labor board for a hearing to decide whether Amazon "created an atmosphere of confusion, coercion and/or fear of reprisals and thus interfered with the employees' freedom of choice."

If that is found to be true, the results of the Bessemer vote should be put aside, union officials argued.

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