



Winning Weekend for Unions at Bally's

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ATLANTIC CITY — Security workers at Bally's Atlantic City on Sunday voted overwhelmingly to unionize, a day after dealers at the casino did likewise.

Security workers voted 151-71 to join the security union.

"You never beat the house, but this weekend, we did. The house came down," union organizing director Steve Maritas said.

That vote came on the heels of Saturday's vote by dealers at Bally's Atlantic City to join one of the largest unions in America, the United Auto Workers. Dealers voted 628-255 in favor of joining that union. The results will be certified as official in about a week, UAW Secretary-Treasurer Elizabeth Bunn said.

"We are terribly disappointed that our dealers chose to hire the services of the Detroit-based labor union," Carlos Tolosa said in a statement.

Tolosa is the eastern division president of Harrah's Entertainment, parent company to Bally's.

Union officials touted the votes as a huge win for organized labor. Several other efforts to unionize were unsuccessful over the years.

What has changed?

"The wages," Maritas said. "You can't expect a security officer to make \$9 or \$10 per hour and spend \$76 per week in family (medical) benefits. It just ain't happening. Our guys in Detroit are making \$16 and \$17 per hour."

His union represents about 30,000 workers nationwide. This is the union's first foray into Atlantic City, he said. But Maritas promised the Bally's vote would not be its last. He said the union will bring organizers into town in coming weeks to help security workers in Atlantic City's other 10 casinos organize.

"In 30 years nobody has been able to organize Atlantic City's security offices," he said. "This is just the beginning. We proved we can do it. We're going after them all at once."

The Bally's vote broke a recent 2-2 deadlock over unionization at the resort's casinos. Dealers at Caesars Atlantic City and Trump Plaza Hotel and Casino joined the union in March. Dealers at Trump Marina Hotel Casino and Atlantic City Hilton Resort voted against organized labor.

Both the unions and their opponents waged a fierce publicity campaign to persuade dealers of the merits or drawbacks of union representation.

"Bally's tried as hard as they could to convince people to vote no," Bunn said.

She said unionization would not harm the casino financially. The union already represents workers at all three Detroit casinos, Greektown, MGM Grand Detroit and MotorCity.

"The bottom line in Detroit has not been affected. Revenue keeps going up," she said. "You can actually have good wages and benefits in workplaces and have thriving companies."

The union vote at Bally's likely will not be the last among Atlantic City's dealers. But Bunn declined to comment on which might try to organize next. "Atlantic City is a union town. Unions have been very good for Atlantic City," Bunn said. "They've raised wages, gotten health insurance and helped give employees a voice on the job." The UAW represents about 1.2 million current or retired workers in various industries including manufacturing, health care, education, and gaming in Detroit and now Atlantic City.