

UNION ELECTION WIN RATE DROPS, ENDING 10-YEAR RISE, NLRB REPORTS

The union win rate in elections conducted by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) decreased in 2007 from the previous year, marking the end of 10 consecutive years in which unions improved their win rates, according to preliminary findings from the NLRB data analyzed by BNA PLUS, the research division of BNA. The number of resolved representation elections held in 2007 also decreased from 2006 levels, continuing an annual decline in the NLRB-supervised elections held since 1996. The union win rate decreased slightly to 60.1 percent in 2007, down from 61.4 percent the year before. Unions have won more than half of all representation elections in each of the past 11 years. The NLRB conducted 1,502 elections in 2007, compared with 1,657 in 2006. In 1996, about 3,300 elections were conducted by the agency. The number of elections won by unions also decreased to 902 in 2007 from 1,018 in 2006. The number of eligible voters decreased to 101,991 in 2007 from 112,336 in 2006. In 2007, unions organized 57,908 workers through the NLRB elections, down from 59,759 the previous year.

The union win rate in decertification elections increased from the previous year. Unions prevailed in 121 of 329 resolved decertification elections, or 36.8 percent in 2007, compared with 127 of 373, or 34 percent in 2006. Unions affiliated with the AFL-CIO won 414 of 700 representation elections in 2007, or 59.1 percent, compared with 60.3 percent in 2006, when they won 463 of 768 elections. Unions in the Change to Win federation, which was formed in mid-2005, won 349 NLRB elections, or 52.2 percent of the 669 elections last year. In 2006, they won 413 of 732 elections, or 56.4 percent.

Of the 10 most active unions, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters led all other unions by participating in 407 representation elections in 2007. This number, however, was down from 426 in 2006. The win rate also dropped to 48.6 percent last year from 49.1 percent in 2006. The Service Employees International Union (SEIU) ranked a distant second by participating in 136 elections, winning 99 or 72.8 percent in 2007. In 2006, the SEIU participated in 167 elections, winning 121 or 72.5 percent. Unions participating in the next highest number of elections, in order, were the International Union of Operating Engineers (IUOE) with 117 elections, the International Association of Machinists with 115 elections, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) with 91 elections, the United Food and Commercial Workers with 85 elections, the United Steelworkers with 71 elections, the United Auto Workers (UAW) with 43 elections, the Laborers' International Union with 42 elections, and the Communications Workers of America with 16 elections.

The SEIU was the most successful of the top 10 unions, winning 72.8 percent of the NLRB elections. The Machinists ranked second, winning 71.3 percent of the elections, followed by the IUOE (63.2 percent), the UAW (58.1 percent), and the IBEW (51.6 percent). Of the top 10 unions, for the first time the Teamsters organized the most workers,—10,546—, followed by the SEIU with 8,640, and the UAW with 8,092. This is the first time since 2000 that the SEIU has not organized the most workers out of the top five unions.

The NLRB statistics do not reflect the full extent of organizing being conducted by unions. Many unions organize largely through neutrality and card-check recognition agreements and other methods. Independent unions won 69 percent of the 200 elections last year, compared with 57.3 percent of the 248 elections in 2006.

By bargaining unit size, unions had the greatest organizing success among very small and very large units. Unions won 62.1 percent of elections in units of fewer than 50 workers, and 69.2 percent in units of more than 500. In elections involving white collar workers, unions won 66.4 percent of 110 representation elections and 50 percent of 20 decertification elections. Unions won 50 percent or more of the elections held in all industries in 2007 except in manufacturing (46.6 percent), communications (36.8 percent), and mining (25 percent). The industry that saw the highest percentage of wins was health care (70 percent), followed by services (68.4 percent). Other sectors where unions won at least 50 percent of the elections included finance, insurance, and real estate (64.5 percent), construction (58.7 percent), transportation, communications, and utilities (58 percent), wholesale (58 percent), and retail (56.7 percent).

The number of elections fell in the two states that held the most elections in 2007, New York had 158 elections in 2007, down from 229 in 2006, while California had 150 elections, down from 167. The number of elections increased in the three states that held the next highest number of elections. Illinois had 120 elections in 2007, up from 119 in 2006; Pennsylvania had 103 elections, up from 85, and Ohio had 85 elections, up from 76.

The report is available for \$95 per copy from BNA PLUS by calling 800-372-1033. Detailed election statistics are available by calling or e-mailing BNA PLUS at bnaplus@bna.com.

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