

# For the first time, Amazon workers vote to unionize

## Article

**The news:** Amazon workers in a Staten Island, New York, warehouse voted to unionize last Friday, marking the **first successful unionization effort among Amazon's workforce**. Meanwhile, a union vote in Bessemer, Alabama, is too close to call, with 416 ballots being contested by both Amazon and the union.

**The underdog prevails:** Amazon has worked aggressively to defeat organizing activity among its workers, using its significant resources to dissuade employees from joining unions.

- In the lead-up to the vote at the Staten Island warehouse, Amazon put up “Vote No” posters, created an anti-union website, and required workers to sit through anti-union presentations, per CNBC.
- The results of a previous vote in Bessemer were overturned after the National Labor Relations Board found Amazon had violated labor laws.

**Why this matters:** The **Amazon Labor Union (ALU)**’s victory in Staten Island could mark a turning point in Amazon’s ability to impose top-down directives on its workers. The ALU is calling for “more reasonable” productivity rates in warehouses, as well as higher wages, more breaks, and additional paid vacation time.

- These demands would increase Amazon’s already hefty labor and operating costs, making it more difficult for the ecommerce giant to deliver on its promise of convenience and continue to grow.
- But the ALU’s capacity for drawing concessions out of Amazon will depend on its ability to get other warehouses on board. Nor is it the only union looking to represent Amazon workers: Should the vote in Bessemer pass, workers would join the **Retail, Wholesale, and Department Store Union**, while the new president of the **International Brotherhood of Teamsters** has made organizing Amazon employees **a top priority**.

**Looking ahead:** Workers are growing **increasingly unafraid** of speaking out against their employers and agitating for higher pay, better work environments, and more benefits, but many of their efforts are yet to bear fruit, as corporations fight back.

- While workers at several **Starbucks** stores have voted to unionize, the company is **facing allegations** that it has retaliated against employees who support the union.
- A union vote at a **Hershey** plant in Virginia failed after the company created a website outlining its objections, per Reuters.

**The big takeaway:** The union’s victory in Staten Island could be the boost that Amazon workers around the country need to start demanding votes in their own districts. Even if the Bessemer vote fails, Amazon’s margin of victory will be much smaller than in the last election, signaling that workers are less intimidated by the company’s tactics.