

The Transformative Union Election at Amazon in Birmingham



YOUR WORKPLACE IS OUR WORK.®

Presented by

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Your Workplace is our Work®



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Amazon Facts

- Prior union vote – DE – 2014 – 30 employees
- Hired over 400,000 new employees during 2020, increasing U.S. workforce to 950,000
- 2020 profits up 84% to \$21 billion
- Amazon stock:
 - \$3,307.62 (4/8/21)
 - \$2,043.00 (4/8/20)
- Jeff Bezos net worth: \$197 billion
- 20% of managers African American or Hispanic



Amazon's Vulnerability

- Political
 - President Biden
 - Senators Sanders and Warren
 - Senator Rubio
- Easily identifiable susceptibility for boycotts
- GAFA: Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon
- Anti-trust risk?
- Congressional action?



Amazon Workplace Issues

- Scheduling unpredictable
- Productivity targets
- Physical work:
“Oh, you’re sore. Your wrists are sore. Your legs are sore. You’re cramping up. There really ain’t no way to stay comfortable because you’ve got to move when the robots move.”



Amazon Workplace Issues

- Respect:

“The management ain’t got no respect for nobody. They’re trying to have you any kind of way, man. They’re overworking people and not paying them what they need to be paying them. I think that should be at least \$17 to \$18 [per hour]. We got to [work] during the coronavirus.”



RWDSU Amazon Organizing Analysis

- A ready-made strong in-house organizing committee
- Massive opening and pandemic: phenomenal demand
- No culture “honeymoon” period
- Employees who earned more at prior organized locations



Election Chronology

March 13, 2020	President declares COVID-19 a national emergency.
March 29, 2020	Amazon opens Bessemer, Alabama fulfillment center – 1,500 employees.
July 2020	Employee Darryl Richardson contacts RWDSU.
September 2020	RWDSU conducts organizing meetings.
October 2020	RWDSU launches organizing efforts.
November 2020	Petition filed; 3,000 cards signed.
January 15, 2021	NLRB direction of election: mail ballot
February 8 – March 29, 2021	Voting period
April 9, 2021	Election results: 738 Yes, 1,798 No, 505 challenges, 76 void

AMAZON UNION NOW!

When workers come together to form a union, they win dignity and respect at work. We, the worker-driven organizing committee at Amazon in Bessemer, Alabama are fighting for just that. Together we can win a real seat at the table with Amazon, make our working conditions safer, fight for needed benefits and ensure good jobs in our community.

Are you interested in joining our BAmazon Union?

Contact us today to learn more from a worker-organizer.



[LEARN MORE](#)



WHY UNIONIZE?

Having a union at Amazon would give us the right to collectively bargain over our working conditions. Together we can change our workplace!

WHY DO WE NEED A UNION AT AMAZON?

AMAZON'S WORKING CONDITIONS ARE NOT SAFE

Amazon has a long history of unsafe working conditions. Read several studies published with data from workers at other facilities.



BAmazon Union is an organizing campaign of the Mid-South Council of the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU). When workers come together to form a union, they win dignity and respect at work. Are you interested in joining the BAmazon Union? Contact us today to learn more from an organizer.

LEARN HOW TO VOTE UNION YES!

Contact Us!

If you are a member of the press, please contact our Communications Director, Chelsea Connor at cconnor@rwdsu.org.





MISSION

Jobs to Move America is a strategic policy center that works to transform public spending and corporate behavior using a comprehensive approach that is rooted in racial and economic justice and community organizing. We seek to advance a fair and prosperous economy with good jobs and healthier communities for all.

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MISSION, VISION, & VALUES | OUR STAFF | OUR BOARD | JOB OPENINGS



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The Alliance for Youth Action grows progressive people power across America by empowering local young people’s organizations to strengthen our democracy, fix our economy, and correct injustices through on-the-ground organizing.

[ABOUT THE ALLIANCE ▶](#)



BOARD

The Alliance for Youth Action / Alliance for Youth Organizing have some awesomely brilliant and strategic advisors behind us. Our board[s] of directors are the kind of activists who've been getting it done for years — and they make sure the raucous and riotous Alliance stays on track and on mission. The arc toward justice is bent a lot farther because of their work.

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ABOUT US

Creating Good Jobs, a Clean Environment, and a Fair and Thriving Economy

Too often, Americans are asked to choose between jobs and the environment. But as we face increasingly severe impacts of environmental challenges like climate change and adapt to an interconnected global economy, we can no longer choose one or the other. We believe we can and must choose both.

The BlueGreen Alliance unites labor unions and environmental organizations to solve today's environmental challenges in ways that create and maintain quality jobs and build a clean, thriving, and equitable economy.

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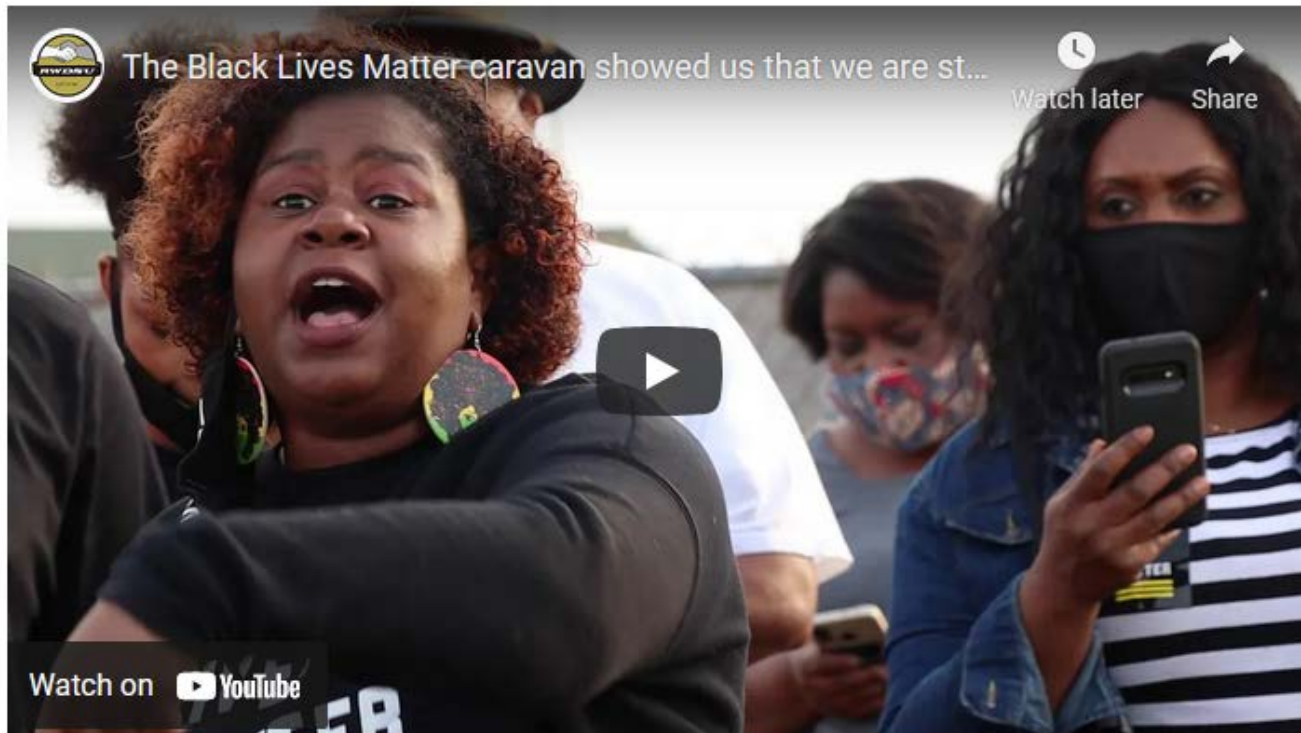
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BAmazon Union UPDATE 3.14.2021

THE BLACK LIVES MATTER CARAVAN SHOWED US THAT WE ARE STRONG IN OUR FIGHT FOR POSITIVE CHANGE!

Yesterday, BLM Birmingham kicked off a 100+ car caravan in support of us! Ahead of the ride, Black Lives Matter Movement leaders stood alongside movement elders and spoke to what we've long known to be true; Amazon's majority Black workforce has been treated as disposable and not been given the dignity and respect we deserve. Community groups and unions from the surrounding area joined RWDSU organizers for the caravan. Watch and share this incredible video recapping the day:



BAmazon Union UPDATE 3.10.2021

Workers around the world are standing shoulder to shoulder with us! Watch the latest solidarity videos from union workers and supporters around the globe:





Amazon Workers Reject Union

- “Amazon is the only job I know where they pay your health insurance from Day 1.” Employee Lavonette Stokes was quoted as telling the New York Times. She disliked that organizers tried to cast the union drive as an extension of the Black Lives Matter movement because most of the workers are black. “This was not an African American issue,” said Ms. Stokes, who is black.



RWDSU Response to Election Result

- RWDSU President Stuart Applebaum:

“Amazon has left no stone unturned in its effort to gaslight its own employees. We won’t let Amazon’s lies, deception and illegal activities go unchallenged, which is why we are formally filing charges against all of the egregious and blatantly illegal actions taken by Amazon during the union vote.”



LESSONS LEARNED





1. “All politics is local.”

- President Biden
- Senators Rubio, Sanders and Warren
- National Football League Players Association
- Black Lives Matter
- Jobs to Move America
- International Union Support



2. Employees Are Proud of Where They Work – Defend Yourself

- **Amazon Tangles with Senator Warren on Twitter**

 **Elizabeth Warren** ✓ @SenWarren · Mar 25, 2021 
Giant corporations like Amazon report huge profits to their shareholders – but they exploit loopholes and tax havens to pay close to nothing in taxes. That’s just not right – and it’s why I’ll be introducing a bill to make the most profitable companies pay a fair share.



A good place to start is to be clear about the extent to which

 **Amazon News** ✓
@amazonnews

1/3 You make the tax laws @SenWarren; we just follow them. If you don’t like the laws you’ve created, by all means, change them. Here are the facts: Amazon has paid billions of dollars in corporate taxes over the past few years alone.



Amazon News  @amazonnews · Mar 25, 2021



Replying to @amazonnews and @SenWarren

2/3 In 2020, we had another \$1.7B in federal tax expense and that's on top of the \$18 billion we generated in sales taxes for states and localities in the U.S. Congress designed tax laws to encourage investment in the economy.



Amazon News 

@amazonnews

3/3 So what have we done about that? \$350B in investments since 2010 & 400K new US jobs last year alone. And while you're working on changing the tax code, can we please raise the federal minimum wage to \$15?

7:47 PM · Mar 25, 2021



2.1K



976



Copy link to Tweet



Elizabeth Warren ✓

@SenWarren



I didn't write the loopholes you exploit, [@amazon](#) – your armies of lawyers and lobbyists did. But you bet I'll fight to make you pay your fair share. And fight your union-busting. And fight to break up Big Tech so you're not powerful enough to heckle senators with snotty tweets.



Amazon News ✓ @amazonnews

Replying to @SenWarren

1/3 You make the tax laws @SenWarren; we just follow them. If you don't like the laws you've created, by all means, change them. Here are the facts: Amazon has paid billions of dollars in corporate taxes over the past few years alone.

10:09 PM · Mar 25, 2021



62.9K



4.9K



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Amazon News ✓

@amazonnews



This is extraordinary and revealing. One of the most powerful politicians in the United States just said she's going to break up an American company so that they can't criticize her anymore.



Elizabeth Warren ✓ @SenWarren

I didn't write the loopholes you exploit, @amazon – your armies of lawyers and lobbyists did. But you bet I'll fight to make you pay your fair share. And fight your union-busting. And fight to break up Big Tech so you're not powerful enough to heckle senators with snotty tweets. [twitter.com/amazonnews/sta...](https://twitter.com/amazonnews/status/1374888888888888888)

2:24 PM · Mar 26, 2021



10.6K



7.3K



Copy link to Tweet



3. Social Media, Public Pressure

- Social media creates risk of workplace issues becoming public issues
- Employer vulnerability to public pressure
 - Identifiable product/service
 - Health care
 - Financial institutions
 - Retail/service/hospitality
- Create an emergency response team
 - Corporate communications
 - HR
 - Operations
 - Legal



4. Demographics Matter Only if it is a Workplace Issue

- Bureau of Labor Statistics - union membership:
 - White: 10.7%
 - African American: 12.3%
 - Asian: 8.9%
 - Hispanic/Latino: 9.8%
 - Men: 11%
 - Women: 10.5%



5. Pay/Benefits

- Union activity may not start due to pay, but it ends with the answer to this question: “Will I be better off with or without a union?”
- Amazon:
 - \$15/hour starting pay
 - Insurance effective first day of employment
 - Leave policies
 - Opportunities for advancement



6. Workplace Culture Assessment

- Diversity, inclusion, equity, **engagement**
- “I would hate to be an idea at this company.”
- Candid and courageous communications
- Pay/benefits
- Interview/on-boarding process
- Working conditions
- Leadership

The union drive at Amazon signals a potential sea change for the labor movement. Will it last?



In the 1930s and 40s, a big upswing in union organizing in the United States was marked by successful campaigns at high-profile companies like General Motors, Ford, US Steel and AT&T.

Now, organizers are hoping that the union fight at Amazon could serve as a similar bellwether, particularly if it is successful — capitalizing on the most pro-labor climate in Washington in decades to inspire a wave of organizing around the country.



Recent Major Elections in Southern States

February 2014	Volkswagen in Chattanooga, TN UAW 626 YES 712 NO
February 2015	Volkswagen in Chattanooga, TN UAW – Maintenance Employees 113 YES 47 NO
February 2017	Boeing in Charleston, SC IAM 731 YES 2087 NO
August 2017	Nissan in Canton, MS UAW 1,307 YES 2,244 NO
May 2018	Boeing in Charleston, SC IAM Flight Line Mechanics 104 YES 65 NO
June 2019	Volkswagen in Chattanooga, TN UAW 776 YES 833 NO



PRO Act

1. Eliminate right-to-work laws – potentially 950,000 new revenue sources
2. Eliminate employer meetings with employees to discuss unionization
3. Require employers to report fees paid for legal assistance during election campaign
4. Eliminate mandatory arbitration agreements with class action waivers
5. Narrow definition of who is an independent contractor



PRO Act

6. Mandatory first contract arbitration
7. Prohibit lockouts/permanent replacement of strikers
8. Permit secondary boycotts
9. Increase damages for unfair labor practices
10. Card-based bargaining if unfair labor practices.



The Biden Board

- Bargaining unit scope – micro units
- Return to Obama Board interpretations
 - Joint employer
 - Section 7 rights – implied concerted activity
- Neutrality agreements



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