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Representation Elections

2008 Union Win Rate Rises to 66.8 Percent, As Number of NLRB Elections Also Increases

Unions won 66.8 percent of representation elections conducted by the National Labor Relations Board in 2008, the highest win rate since BNA PLUS, BNA's research division, began analyzing NLRB data in 1984.

The number of resolved representation elections held in 2008 also increased from 2007 levels, the first increase since 1998 in the number of elections conducted by the board, according to preliminary findings from NLRB data analyzed by BNA PLUS.

The union win rate increased to 66.8 percent in 2008, up from 60.4 percent the year before. According to statistics provided by the NLRB, this is the highest win rate since 1955 when unions won 67.6 percent of the elections in which they participated. Unions have won more than half of all representation elections in each of the past 12 years.

NLRB conducted 1,579 elections in 2008, compared with 1,519 in 2007. In 1998, about 3,300 elections were conducted by the agency. The number of elections won by unions also increased, to 1,054 in 2008 from 918 the year before.

70,511 Workers Organized in NLRB Elections

The number of voters eligible to participate in the elections also increased from 102,494 in 2007 to 108,587 in 2008. In 2008, unions organized 70,511 workers through NLRB elections, up from 58,260 the year before.

The NLRB statistics do not reflect the full extent of organizing being conducted by unions. Many unions organize through neutrality and card-check recognition agreements and other methods.

The union win rate in decertification elections continued to increase. Unions prevailed in 134 of 279 resolved decertification elections, or 48 percent in 2008, up from 122 of 331 decertification elections, or 36.9 percent, in 2007.

Representation Elections By Union Affiliation

Unions affiliated with the AFL-CIO won 417 of 647 representation elections in 2008, or 64.5 percent, compared with 59.5 percent in 2007, when they won 421 of 707 elections.

Unions in the Change to Win federation, which was formed in mid-2005, won 446 NLRB elections, or 61.3 percent of the 728 elections they participated in last year. In 2007, they won 355 of 677 elections, or 52.4 percent of those in which they participated.

Of the 10 most active unions, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters again led all other unions by participating in 394 representation elections in 2008. Although this number was down from 412 elections held in 2007, the win rate increased from 48.8 percent in 2007 to 58.6 percent in 2008.

The Service Employees International Union ranked a distant second by participating in 157 elections, winning 113 or 72 percent in 2008. In 2007, SEIU participated in 137 elections, winning 99 or 72.3 percent.

Unions participating in the next highest number of elections, in order, were the United Food and Commercial Workers with 116 elections, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers with 114 elections, the International Union of Operating Engineers with 97 elections, and the International Association of Machinists with 85 elections.

The IAM was the most successful of the 10 most active unions, winning 76.5 percent of the NLRB elections in which it participated. SEIU ranked second, winning 72 percent of the elections, followed by the Laborers International Union (70.3 percent), the IUOE (67 percent), and the United Auto Workers (61.9 percent).

IBT Organized the Most Workers

For the second year in a row, the Teamsters organized the most workers—13,815, followed by SEIU with 10,928, and UFCW with 9,243. This is the second time since 2000 that SEIU has not organized the most workers out of the top five unions.

Independent unions won 75.1 percent of the 257 elections in which they participated last year, compared with 68.8 percent of 205 elections in 2007.

By bargaining unit size, unions had the greatest organizing success among very small and very large units. Unions won 69.3 percent of 1,070 elections in units of fewer than 50 employees, and 64 percent of 25 elections in units of more than 500.

Unions won 50 percent or more of the elections held in all industries in 2008 except in wholesale (48.9), communications (48 percent), mining (47.4 percent), and manufacturing (46.5 percent). The industry with the highest percentage of wins was finance, insurance, and real estate (89.7 percent), followed by health care (74.3 percent). Other sectors where unions won at least 50 percent of the elections in which they participated included services (72.9 percent), transportation, communications, and

utilities (70.8 percent), construction (66.2 percent), and retail(54.7 percent).

The number of elections increased in the two states that held the most elections in 2008. New York had 210 elections in 2008, up from 163 in 2007, while California had 177 elections, up from 150.

By Michelle Amber

The accompanying BNA graphics illustrate highlights of the research findings. The full report, which includes additional tables involving elections by industry, unit size, state, and white collar employees, is available for \$105 per copy from BNA PLUS by calling 800-372-1033, option 5, then option 2. Detailed election statistics also are available by calling or e-mailing BNA PLUS at bnaplus@bna.com.

BLRB Representation Elections 2004 - 2008, by Union Affiliation

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