



## Tropicana dealers vote for UAW's representation

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[ATLANTIC CITY](#) - Dealers at [Tropicana Casino and Resort](#) voted in the [United Auto Workers](#) as their collective bargaining representative by a sweeping majority Saturday, driven by what they said was the desire for job security at a casino where mass layoffs have occurred since a new owner took over in January.

Tropicana dealers voted 626-157, or 80 percent, in favor of the union. This is the fourth casino where employees have sought UAW representation since March; those at two casinos voted against it.

"I think this is very important to keep the momentum going in Atlantic City while we've started bargaining with Caesars ... it seems there is a lot of fear at the Trop," said [Joe Ashton](#), director of the UAW region that includes [New Jersey](#). "They have had new layoffs, they have had new management. I think the people are really concerned about their jobs."

It is also the third of the four pro-union properties that recently have been or soon will be taken over by private equity interests - an indication that workers feel nervous about changes in company direction that could lead to the loss of longtime jobs. In the months since [Columbia Sussex Corp.](#) took over Tropicana, it has cut 15 percent of its employees, saying former owner [Aztar Corp.](#) maintained a bloated workforce and it was bringing the property up to standards at other casinos here.

Dealers at [Caesars Atlantic City](#) and [Bally's Atlantic City](#), who voted for the UAW in March and June, respectively, pointed to the cuts at Tropicana as events that they worried could play out for them next year, when parent company [Harrah's Entertainment Inc.](#) is taken over by private equity companies.

Tropicana could not be reached for comment Sunday.

Dealers said Sunday they were relieved, because although Tropicana recently reassured them that it has never cut dealers' jobs, they were concerned that layoffs could happen after Labor Day, when the busy season starts slowing. "We crushed them!" someone wrote under the vote tally on a poster near the dealers' break room.

But if the UAW and Tropicana negotiate a contract for dealers - the bargaining unit would consist of about 950, the union said - the union could not prevent the casino from laying off workers.

"Quite frankly, we can discuss it with them, sit down and find out what the reason is, but if the company is going to cut back, that's the company's prerogative," said Joe Ashton. "We don't agree with it at times, but it's their right."

However, the union during contract negotiations could try to have the company agree to certain measures that would make layoffs easier and more fair for employees.

Most of the union contracts mandate that if employers decide they will lay workers off, they must do so in reverse order of seniority, which makes it harder for them to fire longtime employees, according to Ashton. He noted that they also have recall rights, which means that if someone is laid off, his or her position cannot be filled with someone off the street or someone with lesser seniority. The casino cannot fill the position afterward unless they first give the laid-off worker an offer to come back.

Tropicana workers long have been concerned that many of the people in other departments that the casino has indiscriminately laid off workers, with little regard for their length of employment.

The union also would work to negotiate severance packages for workers and, if layoffs occurred, make joint efforts with the state to obtain funds to provide training so members could find another job quickly, Ashton said.

The UAW will not be certified as Tropicana dealers' collective bargaining agent until next week. Tropicana has the chance to file an objection with the [NLRB](#) if it believes the union acted inappropriately leading up to the election.

So far, [Trump Plaza Hotel and Casino](#) and Bally's Atlantic City have filed objections against the union after workers there voted for representation, and the UAW filed an objection against [Trump Marina Hotel Casino](#), where it lost an election in May by eight votes. Such actions can tie up the process for months.

The UAW recently has shown interest in representing casino employees besides dealers. Caesars slot technicians approved a bid to unionize by 65 percent last week, and cashiers at Caesars will vote on union representation Sept. 1.

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