

# Caesars vows fight over unionization vote by its dealers

Atlantic City – Although dealers at Caesars Atlantic City voted overwhelmingly over the weekend to join a union, it could be quite some time before employees sit down at the bargaining table with casino management.

The company announced plans to challenge the election results before the National Labor Relations Board, alleging workers were pressured or threatened by the union to sign up.

Dealers, keno and simulcast employees voted 572 to 128 to become part of the United Auto Workers union in Saturday's vote.

„We're very pleased and very excited, and we're looking forward to getting to the bargaining table and bargaining a contract," said Elizabeth Bunn, the union's national secretary-treasurer.

Not so fast, said Harrah's Entertainment Inc., which owns Caesars and three other Atlantic City casinos.

„We believe that the conduct of the United Auto Workers union and their supporters, including threats to employees if they did not vote for the union, as well as false accusations that Caesars bribed employees to buy their vote, destroyed the conditions for a free and fair election," said Harrah's spokeswoman Alyce Parker.

Bunn denied that the union had threatened anyone, and said the 80 percent approval rate should speak for itself.

But Parker said Harrah's Entertainment would file objections to the election. Resolving them could take several years, she

said.

Patricia Gilbert, a spokeswoman for the labor board, said it should not take that long. „It’s not an overly long process,“ she said.

But it is one that employers can string out to try to discourage newly unionized workers, said Bennet Zurofsky, a Newark labor lawyer.

„The employer works the law by forcing everything to hearings, delaying coming to the table with real bargaining, and tying things up in court for years by standing on their rights, often while asserting they are protecting the rights of the employees,“ he said.

„It breaks the hearts of the workers. They don’t see their union delivering for them.“

A similar situation took place in Atlantic City in late 1982, when dealers at what was then called Bally’s Park Place voted to form a union, but were unable to reach agreement with the company on a contract and went on strike the following May.

That work stoppage proved disastrous, falling apart after three days and ending with Sports Arena and Casino Employees Local 137 waiving its right to act as bargaining representatives for the casino’s dealers.

Another unionization vote is scheduled for March 31 at Trump Plaza Hotel & Casino, also by the United Auto Workers.