

UAW 'Stunned' by VW's Tennessee Vote

CHATTANOOGA, Tenn. (AP) – Just 87 votes at the Volkswagen plant in Tennessee separated the United Auto Workers union from what would have been its first successful organization of workers at a foreign automaker in the South.

Instead of celebrating a potential watershed moment for labor politics in the region, UAW supporters were left crestfallen by the 712-626 vote against union representation in the election that ended a little over a week ago.

The result stunned many labor experts who expected a UAW win because Volkswagen tacitly endorsed the union and even allowed organizers into the Chattanooga factory to make sales pitches.

The loss is a major setback for the UAW's effort to make inroads in the growing South, where foreign automakers have 14 assembly plants, eight built in the past decade, said Kristin Dziczek, director of the labor and industry group at the Center for Automotive Research, an industry think tank in Michigan.

why the Chattanooga plant is the company's only major factory worldwide without formal worker representation.

VW wanted a German-style "works council" in Chattanooga to give employees a say over working conditions.

The company says U.S. law won't allow it without an independent union.

In Chattanooga, the union faced stern opposition from Republican politicians who warned that a UAW victory would chase away other automakers who might come to the region.

Sen. Bob Corker of Tennessee was the most vocal opponent, saying that he was told that VW would soon announce plans to build a new SUV in Chattanooga if the VW workers rejected the union.

That was later denied by a VW executive, who said the union vote had no bearing on expansion decisions.

Other state politicians threatened to cut off state incentives for the plant to expand if the union was approved.

After 53 percent of the workers voted against his union, King said he was outraged at what he called "outside interference" in the election.

He wouldn't rule out challenging the outcome with the National Labor Relations Board.

"It's never happened in this country before that the U.S. senator, the governor, the leader of the House, the legislature here, threatened the company with no incentives, threatened workers with a loss of product," King said. "We'll look at all our options in the next few days."

The union could contend that Corker and other local politicians were in collusion with VW and tried to frighten workers into thinking the SUV would be built in Mexico if they voted for the union, said Gary Chaison, a labor relations professor at Clark University in Worcester, Mass.

But Chaison said it will be difficult to tie the politicians to the company, which remained neutral throughout the voting process.

"It's the employer that has real power," he said.

The loss put a spotlight on the union's major difficulty in the South, which would be signing up people who have no history with organized labor and are fearful of being the first in the

area to join, Chaison said.

Dziczek said the union may have to change its tactics in future organizing efforts, because King's strategy of the union and company working together to help each other did not work.

Republican Gov. Bill Haslam said through a spokesman that he was pleased with the vote and "looks forward to working with the company on future growth in Tennessee."

Corker echoed that sentiment in a release issued after the vote.

"Needless to say, I am thrilled for the employees at Volkswagen and for our community and its future," he said.

VW Employee Rep 'Won't Give Up Fight for Union'

BERLIN (AP) – Volkswagen's top workers' representative says he won't give up the fight for unionization at the German automaker's plant in Chattanooga, Tenn.

Employees there voted 712-626 last week against joining the United Auto Workers union after state Republicans warned that it could hurt the local economy.

Bernd Osterloh, who is also a member of VW's supervisory board, told the German daily *Suddeutsche Zeitung* in an interview published last week that U.S. labor law experts will check whether undue pressure was put on employees to reject the UAW.

Osterloh says "all options will be examined" to introduce a "works council" at the only major VW plant worldwide without formal worker representation.

He told the paper that the failure to achieve this might prevent Volkswagen from building future plants in the U.S. South.

"We'll look at all our options in the next few days."

**– Bob King
UAW President**

"If this was going to work anywhere, this is where it was going to work," she said of the Volkswagen vote.

Organizing a Southern plant is so crucial to the union that UAW President Bob King told workers in a speech that the union has no long-term future without it.

The unexpected loss in Tennessee means the union remains largely quarantined with the Detroit Three in the Midwest and Northeast.

Many viewed VW as the union's best chance to gain a crucial foothold in the South because other automakers have not been as welcoming as Volkswagen.

Labor interests make up half of the supervisory board at VW in Germany, and they questioned

Job Fair Set for Veterans

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation will host "Hiring Our Heroes – Detroit," a hiring fair for veterans and military spouses.

More than 65 employers are expected to participate with jobs available for veterans and military spouses of all ranks and levels of experience, said Lt. Col. Kathryn Poynton (ret.), national director of events for Hiring Our Heroes, U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

She is also an Army National Guard veteran. Companies range from America's biggest employers to dozens of small companies from the region.

The event will also include free employment workshops featuring interactive sessions on resume building, job search tools, and interviewing techniques for all jobseekers.

The workshop is set for Saturday, March 1, from 9 to 11:45 a.m. in the John D. Dingell VA Medical Center located at 4646 John R Street in Detroit.

It will be followed by a hiring fair starting at 1 p.m. and going until 4 p.m.

Interested job seekers should pre-register at hiringourheroes.org. Walk-in job seekers will be allowed but they must provide

proof of service in the armed forces.

Since Hiring Our Heroes began in March 2011, more than 1,500 companies have hired 21,600 veterans and military spouses as a result of more than 670 hiring fairs, Poynton said.

In March 2012, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, National Chamber Foundation, and Capital One launched Hiring 500,000 Heroes, a national campaign to engage the business community in committing to hire half-a-million veterans and military spouses by the end of 2014.

Thus far, more than 1,400 businesses of all sizes have pledged to hire 383,000 heroes toward this goal. To date, 255,000 hires have been confirmed.

Poynton said this hiring event is also being held in partnership with the Detroit Area Chamber of Commerce, the Michigan Committee of the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), Michigan Veterans Service Division, Wayne County Veteran Services, Suits for Soldiers, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, The American Legion, the Department of Labor Veterans' Employment & Training Service (DOL VETS), and other local partners.

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