

UNION ORGANIZING

Jeld-Wen workers reject chance to go union

Workers at a Jeld-Wen door manufacturing plant in Chiloquin, Oregon, said no to the Machinists union in a 137-to-52 vote Sept. 21. It was the first-ever union election at the door factory, located in Klamath County, 45 minutes north of the California border on Highway 97. It was also the first time Jeld-Wen workers have voted on union representation since February 2013, when the Machinists announced a long-term effort to unionize the overwhelmingly non-union company.

Oregonians may know Jeld-Wen as the Oregon-based door and window company that Dick Wendt founded in 1960 in Klamath Falls. But after Wendt died in 2010, his heirs sold a majority stake in the company to Toronto private equity firm Onex, and the company shifted its headquarters to Charlotte, North Carolina. Today, Jeld-Wen has annual revenues of \$3.5 billion and is one of the world's largest manufacturers of doors and windows — with approximately 20,000 employees and 113 manufacturing facilities in 25 countries. On June 1, Jeld-Wen filed preliminary paperwork to go public with an initial public offering on the New York Stock Exchange. Details are still being worked out, and the company is

also reportedly exploring a sale to a private party.

Meanwhile, in tiny Chiloquin, population 724, the union campaign was conducted by the workers themselves. To help, the Machinists assigned Jake Merkel, a Raymond, Washington, resident who works for the national union as an apprentice organizer.

Merkel found the Chiloquin plant to be a high-turnover industrial workplace where pay starts at \$11 an hour and tops out about \$20, with most workers making about \$14.50. Merkel says workers told of poor treatment, expensive health benefits, and short-notice requirements to work overtime.

When the union asked the National Labor Relations Board on Aug. 24 to schedule a union election, Merkel says 65 percent of the workforce had signed papers saying they wanted to join the union. Then came the employer anti-union campaign.

"We were always confident that once employees learned the facts about what the union membership would mean to them and their families, they would reject bringing a third party into the employment relationship," said Jeld-Wen's in-house labor attorney Eric Martin in a company news release quoted in the Klamath Falls Herald and News.

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Jeld-Wen itself had no qualms about using third parties. In legal proceedings before the National Labor Relations Board, it was represented by attorney Victor Kishch of Stoel Rives. It also hired California-based union avoidance consultants Cruz and Associates to talk to its workers. Jeld-Wen previously paid \$1.66 million to Cruz and Associates for work at 36 worksites over a six-month period in 2013 — just after the Machinists announced the formation of Justice for Jeld-Wen Workers. That's according to mandatory disclosures the company filed with the U.S. Labor Department; disclosures of more recent payments aren't available yet.

In the weeks leading up to the union vote, Merkel says Cruz and Associates led daily anti-union meetings at the plant. Jeld-Wen also gave raises and got rid of mandatory overtime.

When the election was held, Machinists had just 28 percent support.

"We're not done with Chiloquin, just because we lost," Merkel said. Union supporters continue to work at the plant, and if conditions change, they could try again to find majority support.

Union-made Halloween treats



If you want your Halloween to be all treats and no tricks, make sure all your candy is union-made in America. The Los Angeles County Federation of Labor's resource site, Labor 411, has an extensive list of union-made candies. Here are some highlights, featuring sweets made by the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers and the United Food and Commercial Workers:

5th Avenue, Abba-Zaba, Almond Roca, Baby Ruth, Big Hunk, Bit-O-Honey, Butterfinger, Cadbury, Candy House Buttons, Caramello, Clark Bar, Dum Dums, Ghirardelli Chocolate, Gimbal's Fine Candies, Hershey's Kisses, Hershey's Hugs, Hershey's Nuggets, Jawbreakers, Jelly Belly, Kit Kat, Laffy Taffy, LOOK!, Mallo Cups, Malted Milk Balls, Mary Jane, Mighty Malts, Necco Wafers, Red Vines, Rocky Road, Rolo, Russell Stover, See's Candies, Sky Bar, Smarties, Snaps, Sour Patch Kids, Sour Punch, Super Ropes, Toblerone, Tootsie Rolls, Trolli, U-NO, York Peppermint Patties, and Zagnut.

Boycott Note: Until a Bakers Union strike is resolved, don't purchase Just Born candies. Products include Marshmallow Peeps, Mike and Ike, Hot Tamales, and Goldenberg's Peanut Chews.

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