

Wynn Vegas Dealers Vote to Unionize

Las Vegas – Days after billionaire casino magnate Steve Wynn told dealers he made „a big mistake“ in allowing supervisors to share in their tips, full-time dealers at the Wynn Las Vegas resort voted overwhelming to join a union.

The dealers voted 444-149 in favor of being represented by the Transportation Workers Union of America in an election this weekend that was sanctioned by the National Labor Relations Board, organizer Dennis Laux said Sunday.

The vote capped months of heated debate at the luxury property after management in September implemented a controversial tip-sharing plan that cut into dealers' tokens. Dealers said the policy has resulted in a 15 percent to 20 percent cut in their tip income.

„It's huge. You can't even imagine how happy we all are about this,“ said Laux, a baccarat dealer who helped organize the drive. „We've taken one of the largest casinos in Nevada and done something that Steve Wynn said we would never accomplish.“

Messages seeking comment from casino officials were not immediately returned.

The vote, by nearly all of the 633 full-time dealers at Wynn's flagship casino, came after Wynn made a personal plea to dealers in three mandatory meetings Thursday, Laux said.

„I made a big mistake,“ Wynn told them, according to an audio recording of one of the meetings posted on the blog of political commentator Jon Ralston.

„I did not realize the extent of the mistake I had made until

yesterday," Wynn said, explaining his talk with a longtime employee who felt betrayed. „I was more focused on the right thing I did for the bosses, than the wrong thing I did to the dealers.“

The casino had said the tip-pooling arrangement would better compensate supervisors and give employees the incentive to be promoted. It said dealers had averaged more than USD 100,000 a year in total pay, while supervisors got about USD 60,000. The tip restructuring had dealers averaging USD 90,000, while supervisors got about USD 96,000, a level dealers could reach through performance bonuses.

Wynn said he implemented the tip pool policy as he struggled to keep qualified people in supervisory posts, but he told dealers he was wrong and urged them to vote against the union.

„I want the chance to do what I can ... to put the smile back on your face," he said. „I'm your guy. I've got to be your guy in order for us to really get great and I want to stay that way.“

The casino has seven days to challenge the vote, Laux said. If not, the union will form a new local, Local 721, and elect a bargaining committee and officers, he said.

One of the first negotiating points was to revisit the tip agreement. „That tip sharing, we definitely want that back in our pockets," Laux said.