

Atlantic City casino dealers vote to join union

Atlantic City, New Jersey – Casino dealers at Bally's Atlantic City voted emphatically in favor of forming a union Sunday in what both sides considered a pivotal vote in the unionization effort at the resort city's 11 casinos.

The vote by full- and part-time dealers, dual-rate dealers, keno and simulcast employees was 628-255 in favor of becoming part of the United Auto Workers union.

"This strong majority vote is another great victory for casino dealers in Atlantic City," said Joe Ashton, director of UAW Region 9.

"We're proud to have been able to support these workers secure a voice on the job, and we look forward to bargaining a contract that will address pay, benefits, job security and other issues of concern for casino dealers."

The Bally's vote followed unsuccessful drives to unionize at Trump Marina Hotel Casino and the Atlantic City Hilton. Before that, in March, dealers at Caesars Atlantic City and Trump Plaza Hotel and Casino voted to join the UAW.

The union already represents dealers at three Detroit gambling halls: MGM Grand Detroit Casino, MotorCity Casino and Greektown Casino.

"We are terribly disappointed that our dealers chose to hire the services of the Detroit-based union," said Carlos Tolosa, president of the Eastern Division of Harrah's Entertainment Inc., which operates Bally's Atlantic City.

Many of Atlantic City's 45,000 casino workers here already are represented by unions, including many service employees. But

until this year, dealers were not among them. Previous efforts to unionize dealers either failed or were quickly undone.

The union drive comes at a time when Atlantic City casinos are facing competition from slots parlors in Pennsylvania and New York and could face an in-state challenge if a proposed parlor opens at the Meadowlands Race Track.

To keep pace, Atlantic City's casinos are undertaking a wave of costly expansion and renovation, which in turn has led to greater pressure to control labor costs.

At Tropicana Casino and Resort, nearly 700 jobs have been eliminated since it was bought in January by privately held Columbia Sussex Corp.