

# Union creates Las Vegas division to represent dealers

The international union organizing casino dealers on the Strip is forming a new gaming division to better focus its efforts to unionize locally. The Transport Workers Union of America's top officials announced the new Las Vegas-based division during a special meeting that drew nearly 130 local dealers.

„We're committed to getting the job done and we're not going away," the division director, Joseph Carbon, said. „We're committed to organizing the dealers of Las Vegas and getting them a contract. This furthers our commitment.“

Las Vegas Dealers Local 721 has operated as an affiliate of the New York City-based union's transit division since dealers at Wynn Las Vegas approved a union in May. Transport Workers Union International President James Little said the new division will allow money and resources to be allocated directly from the union board.

The division will have autonomy to train shop stewards, elect fellow dealers to its board and direct future organizing efforts. So far, only dealers from Wynn Las Vegas and Caesars Palace held elections approving representation, but Little doesn't believe it's too early to set up the new division.

„Let's start now because it's at the ground floor," Little said. „Let's build that structure in place to really give them the basics and be able to put resources into it. Once I create the division I can resource it better.“ The union has already taken other steps to organize dealers at other local properties.

Two Web sites aimed at dealers at The Mirage and Mandalay Bay have been set up. Union officials, who used similar Web sites during their organizing efforts at Caesars Palace, said the

new Web sites are not indicators of which properties will be targeted next.

A spokesman for MGM Mirage, which owns both properties, said the union is „welcome to try to relabel itself anyway it wants.“ „Direct communication with management is a more efficient and appropriate way to handle disputes without interference from union bosses back east,“ MGM Mirage spokesman Alan Feldman said.

Management at properties owned by Harrah's Entertainment, the owner of Caesars Palace, held closed-door, mandatory employee meetings last month at the Flamingo, Harrah's and Paris Las Vegas encouraging workers not to unionize.

„We are committed to communicating directly with our employees and we believe the dealers have the right to fully understand the reputation and business practices of this union,“ said Jan Jones, Harrah's senior vice president of communications and government relations, in a statement. „Along with the facts on the nature of collective bargaining.“

The Transport Workers Union first tried to organize dealers at 11 casinos in 2001 but was largely unsuccessful. Dealers at the Tropicana, Stratosphere and the New Frontier approved union representation, although the only contract that materialized was the one that covered 105 dealers at the New Frontier.

Little blames the 2001 failures on the union leadership and said he has reviewed those unionizing efforts to avoid repeating the same mistakes. „I think we did an injustice under the old administration,“ said Little, who was elected president in 2006. „Recognizing that, I don't want to go down the same path again. My interest was, if I was going to be serious in representation, then I have to be serious in putting resources in.“

Carbon said negotiations with Wynn Resorts are ongoing and the

union expects to begin negotiations with Caesars in March.