

Why are UAW Union Organizers Back in Athens, Tennessee?

A few years back, United Auto Workers (UAW) union organizers tucked tail and left town after Johnson Controls workers in Athens handed them a resounding defeat, telling them: "UAW -- Union Ain't Wanted." However, UAW organizers again recently set up camp at a local hotel and are taking a second run at Johnson Controls workers. But why?

Why won't the UAW union take "no" for an answer?

Even though nearly 90% of Johnson Controls employees previously decided they wanted no part of the union, union officials apparently won't take "no" for an answer.

Since then, it has been a tough couple years for UAW officials. Facing dwindling membership numbers, sagging dues revenues, mass layoffs and plant closures at bankrupt suppliers, and the shipping of many jobs overseas, union officials are more determined than ever to bolster union ranks.

As a result, it is a sad fact that many companies -- including Johnson Controls, which operates a plant right here in Athens, Tennessee -- have been bullied into a deal with the UAW union, which is intended to impose union affiliation on the employees -- like it or not.

These backroom deals -- so-called "neutrality agreements" -- are kept hush-hush by union officials and the employers whose arms are twisted to sign. In fact, Johnson Controls management in Milwaukee won't even let the company's local managers tell employees the full story.

This sweetheart deal includes a requirement that Johnson Controls provide the union with access to company facilities and -- even more ominously -- personal information about their employees, including their names, phone numbers, and home addresses.

Is Johnson Controls going to give out your personal information to UAW organizers?

Union officials are reluctant to let workers choose for themselves whether or not they want to unionize through the traditional secret ballot election process. UAW officials know that without coercion, most workers in the automotive industry reject unionization.

So, armed with a company-provided list of the names and addresses of each employee, union organ-

izers use tactics such as "home visits," where workers report they feel pressured to sign union authorization cards. And once UAW officials sign up a majority of the workers, Johnson Controls has agreed in advance to recognize the union as the sole and exclusive representative of all its employees, even those who did not sign a card.

Unfortunately, these are not Girl Scouts stopping by to sell cookies. These are full-time union operatives whose sole purpose is to get workers to sign the cards -- no matter what. Often, employees are misled, harassed, or feel threatened into signing.



What the workers are not told is that they are signing away their freedom. By signing the cards, workers are forfeiting the right to negotiate their own wages and working conditions

based on their individual merit. They can no longer talk to their employer once the UAW has become their "exclusive bargaining agent." In addition, many employees later find out that the cards they signed are nearly impossible to revoke. Sign one of these cards and you are also signing away any possibility of a secret ballot election.

What employee benefits has the UAW union given away to get the company's assistance?

The federal National Labor Relations Board has already prosecuted UAW officials at other companies for selling out workers' interests just to get companies to agree to provide broad access to the employees, as well as "card check" organizing privileges.

Last year, UAW union officials were forced to cancel outright a company-wide sweetheart deal with Freightliner Corporation in which union officials had unlawfully bargained to limit workers' wage demands, cancel profit sharing plans, and made other concessions in exchange for Freightliner's assistance in coercing workers to unionize. (See: www.nrtw.org/freightliner)

The government also found that Freightliner officials provided unlawful assistance to the union and held unlawful "captive audience" speeches jointly with union officials to pressure employees to sign union authorization cards that were treated as "votes" in favor of unionization.

Can you protect yourself from this union abuse?

The National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation is working to inform workers all over

the country of their rights. We want workers to know that they can resist these coercive arrangements. They do not have to sign union cards, and they cannot be discriminated against, threatened, coerced, or harassed into doing so.

We have provided a suggested letter that employees can send to Johnson Controls to try to prevent the disclosure of their personal information to union organizers. Employees can also use it to request a copy of the secret agreement that union officials have with the company.

Meanwhile, National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation attorneys are able to provide free legal assistance to workers who feel they are being threatened or coerced.

-Sample Letter-

Date

Plant Manager
Johnson Controls, Inc.
Athens, Tennessee

Dear Sir:

I have learned that at other JCI plants around the country, the company has turned over to the United Auto Workers (UAW) union employees' personal information -- names, dates of hire, classification, department, location, home phone numbers, and home addresses -- all without the knowledge, consent, or approval of those employees.

I do not want my personal information released to the UAW or any other union or entity, and I do not authorize such disclosure. Please respond in writing confirming that you have received this request and that you will not release my personal information to the UAW or any other union or entity. If you have already released this information, I ask that you please notify me of that fact at once.

I understand that at other companies, UAW officials have bargained away workers' wage increases and other interests in order to get the company to agree to assist the union's organizing efforts. As JCI has a long tradition of open communication with employees, I ask that you provide me with a copy of any agreements that JCI may have made with UAW officials concerning my employment.

Sincerely,

(Signature)
(Name)
(Address)
(City, State, Zip Code)

cc:
Mr. John M. Barth, President and Chief Executive Officer
Johnson Controls, Inc.
5757 N. Green Bay Ave.
Milwaukee, WI 53201

**Please call the National Right to Work Foundation at 800-336-3600
or go to www.nrtw.org for more information or for free legal aid**