

Starbucks workers in Buffalo, New York vote to form coffee chain's first unionized shop

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New York, December 11 (RHC)-- In an historic workers' victory, employees at a Starbucks store in Buffalo, New York, have voted to unionize. The Elmwood Starbucks is the first among the coffee chain's 9,000 U.S. locations to form a union.

Workers cheered as the results of their vote were announced. Nineteen employees voted in favor and eight against forming a union. The union drive -- and Starbucks' union-busting attempts -- garnered nationwide attention and drew support from labor advocates, including Senator Bernie Sanders. Lexi Rizzo, a shift supervisor at the newly unionized shop, spoke at a Sanders town hall earlier this week.

Lexi Rizzo told reporters: "I've seen the price of our health insurance go up and coverage go down every single year. I've seen partners be denied maternity leave because they just were not getting scheduled enough hours to be eligible. ... I don't agree that if we are unhappy with the way Starbucks is, that we should just leave. I believe that when you love something, you fight to make it better. And that's what we're trying to do with our union campaign."

A union vote failed at a second Buffalo Starbucks location, and a third election at the Buffalo airport Starbucks has not yet been confirmed, after nearly half of the "yes" votes were challenged. The National Labor Relations Board will now review those votes.

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