Atlanta Apple store workers say ‘intimidation’ has made a fair union vote impossible

Workers at the Cumberland Mall Apple store will no longer hold a union election in June, according to a report from *Bloomberg*. The Communications Workers of America (or CWA), the union attempting to organize the store, says it withdrew the request to hold an election because “Apple’s repeated violations of the National Labor Relations Act have made a free and fair election impossible.”

The vote, which was scheduled to begin on June 2nd, would’ve been the first union election at a US Apple store had it gone through. Now, that title will go to a store in Maryland, barring that petition also being withdrawn. Workers at the Towson Town Center store are set to start voting in person on June 15th.

The union says Apple intimidated workers and interfered with organization

In the runup to the now-canceled election, Apple has faced allegations of union-busting. The firm hired anti-union lawyers and has circulated anti-union messages through store leaders and even video messages from executives. The CWA also filed a complaint with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) alleging that the company has held captive-audience meetings in Atlanta to push back against organizing. The NLRB is trying to make these types of meetings illegal.

The company has also tried slightly friendlier tactics to make unionization less enticing for workers — it’s reportedly raising the starting wages for retail workers by $2 an hour.

While pay was at the top of the list of priorities for the organizers at the Atlanta Apple store, published in an open letter last month, there were several other non-monetary requests. They included better career opportunities, especially for marginalized workers, and more flexibility for civic participation and volunteering.

According to *Bloomberg*, the organizers also said that COVID-19 was also a factor in their decision to withdraw the request; they worried it might make it unsafe to vote, or even make it so certain employees couldn’t vote at all. Apple’s COVID safety policies were also mentioned in the organizers’ open letter, which demanded that the company get employee input on its health policies and work harder to enforce its existing safety regulations.

Unionization efforts seemed to have broad support from the store’s employees. When organizers filed to hold an election in April, more than 70 percent of workers had signed cards supporting the move.

The NLRB didn’t immediately respond to *The Verge*’s request for comment on whether the union’s claims of intimidation could lead to an investigation. Apple also didn’t immediately respond to our request for comment about the allegations.

https://www.theverge.com/2022/5/27/23145034/apple-atlanta-retail-store-union-election-canceled-intimidation