

News from EPI

The Amazon election in Bessemer showcased our broken union election system and why we must pass the PRO Act

Statement • By [Celine McNicholas](#) • April 9, 2021

The results of the election at the Amazon fulfillment center in Bessemer, Alabama reveal a broken union election system. It is clear that if policymakers do not reform our nation's labor law system, then they are effectively denying workers a meaningful right to a union and collective bargaining. If they don't take action, policymakers will be the architects of an economy marked by **continued inequality** and injustice. Further, policymakers will be sanctioning workplaces where workers are **dehumanized** and their health and safety is put at risk.

The **Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act** addresses many of the major shortcomings with our current law. Specifically, it would institute meaningful penalties for private-sector employers that coerce and intimidate workers seeking to unionize—as has been **clearly documented** in the Amazon organizing campaign in Bessemer. The PRO Act includes **many other critical reforms** and would also promote greater racial economic justice because **unions and collective bargaining** help shrink the Black–white wage gap and bring greater fairness to the workplace. The House of Representatives passed the PRO Act with bipartisan support, and now it's time for the Senate to pass this important legislation and give workers a voice on the job.

It is important to remember that the results of the Amazon union election serve only as the most recent example of employers thwarting workers' efforts to organize a union. Employers are **charged with violating the law in 41.5% of all union elections** supervised by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). The numbers are worse for large employers, like Amazon, where more than half (54.4%) of employers are charged with violating the law.

The workers at Amazon's Bessemer fulfillment center have performed essential services during the pandemic. They deserved a fair union election system, free of employer coercion and intimidation. It is too late for policymakers to remedy the intimidation and coercion those workers experienced, but they can recognize the courage the Bessemer workers have demonstrated in this election campaign and honor that by demonstrating the political courage to finally prioritize labor law reform. Ensuring that U.S. workers have the right to a union is worth the political fight to end the filibuster. If policymakers fail to act, U.S.

workers will continue to face a rigged system that encourages employers to thwart workers' rights and promotes economic inequality.