

‘We can’t trust them’: workers decry alleged union busting at Amazon air hub

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Workers at Amazon’s largest air hub in the world allege Amazon is retaliating against them as they try to organize their first union. The workers at the 882-acre KCVG air hub in Hebron, Kentucky, have been organizing “March on the Boss” actions at the Amazon facility in which staff confront managers en masse to “demand an end to union busting”, which they claim includes write-ups and other disciplinary actions against workers. Workers at the facility are calling for a starting pay of \$30 an hour, free on-site childcare, double pay for flex (overtime), professional translation and union representation. More than 4,000 workers are employed at the Amazon KCVG air hub. Workers involved in organizing the union drive claim they were targeted after collecting union authorization cards to file with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). Marcio Rodriguez, an Amazon worker for more than three years, joined the union organizing drive at KCVG in response to an experience at a nearby Amazon site where he said he was terminated when his visa expired. Despite having an extension, Rodriguez said, he was notified that he had lost his job. He only found out when he tried to clock in for work and his pass didn’t work. Rodriguez said Amazon managers deter workers from unionizing with claims that unions are businesses only interested in union dues and portraying signing union authorization cards as ceding rather than exercising rights. “We’ve told workers a union is not a business; we’re here to fight for each other to get better benefits, better pay and better working conditions, and that’s really hit home for a lot of workers – we’ve had over 1,000 workers sign union authorization cards,” said Rodriguez. Unionizing efforts by workers at Amazon have been stymied since the first Amazon warehouse in the US won a union election in Staten Island, New York, in April 2022. Amazon filed objections to the election, which an NLRB regional director dismissed, a decision currently being appealed. Objections over Amazon union elections in Albany, New York, and the rerun union election in Bessemer, Alabama, are still awaiting decisions by the NLRB. Amazon spent more than \$14.2m on union avoidance consultants in 2022. According to the NLRB, 222 open or settled unfair labor practice charges as of September 2023 have been filed against Amazon in 25 states. “They want to treat us like retail workers out there. I’ve had multiple managers tell me this is no different than a fulfillment center, which is a complete lie. There is so much liability we have out there, and it is so easy to get hurt,” added Rodriguez. “We have co-workers who are homeless and sleeping in the parking lot because inflation has gotten so high. They could pay us the \$75m Jeff Bezos spent on a support yacht. Each plane we push out there has over \$100,000 in freight in it. So there’s no reason the money isn’t there, they just want to be greedy and keep it.” The union recently alleged that 12 workers involved in organizing for the Amazon Labor Union in the parking lot outside of work hours have received final written warning notices for doing so, placing them at risk of job termination. A spokesperson for Amazon said the warnings were for policy violations and denied they were related to any cause or

group the workers support, claiming Amazon has policies to prevent blocking access to site. Several unfair labor practice charges have been filed by workers with the NLRB at the air hub against Amazon this year related to the union organizing drive. "I've talked to so many people who have two or three other jobs, just because they can't afford to make ends meet working at KCVG," said Jordan Quinn, who has worked at Amazon for more than a year and one of the workers who recently received a final warning from Amazon. "It should be that one job is enough. Jeff Bezos doesn't have two different jobs. Jeff Bezos doesn't have to clock in for 54- to 60-hour weeks, Bezos can be on his yacht in the Mediterranean enjoying the sunshine. I wish I could ever afford to go to the Mediterranean – you know, I can barely afford my rent." Quinn argued peak season pay bumps at Amazon have declined compared to recent years and that annual wages have been undercut by increases in insurance costs. "Amazon says that safety is a top priority – in reality, profit always really comes first, pushing out more volume always comes first," added Quinn. "Despite all of Amazon's corporate speak and their policies, they don't actually care about workers. What they put first is their profits and how much volume they're pushing out. And I think it honestly shows that we can't trust them to make things better. That's why we have to get organized and fight. We're the only ones who have each other's backs in there." A spokesperson for Amazon said in an email: "Our employees have the choice of whether or not to join a union. They always have. We favor opportunities for each person to be respected and valued as an individual, and to have their unique voice heard by working directly with our team. The fact is, Amazon already offers what many unions are requesting: industry-leading pay, health benefits on day one, and opportunities for career growth. We look forward to working directly with our team to continue making Amazon a great place to work."