

It could take months to count the votes

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The results of the Teamsters union certification vote at Watsonville Canning and Frozen Food last week likely won't be known for at least two or three months, a spokesman for the National Labor Relations Board said today.

Strikers and non-striking workers at Watsonville Canning voted Thursday whether they wanted the Teamsters to continue representing them. Of the more than 1,700 votes, only 54 were not challenged.

No objections have yet been filed to the election itself, according to Dean Francis of the NLRB. Such objections can be filed until the close of business on Thursday.

Francis said he expects it to take two or three more weeks just to sort out the almost 1,700 challenged votes, determining on what basis the union or the company made the challenge.

"It's in some of the parties' interests to delay. We'll be pushing and they'll be dragging. It depends on the will of the parties," Francis said.

Whatever happens, Francis said he expects one side or the other to bring the election challenges to a hearing, in which case, it is hard to tell how long it will be before results are known.

"It's not going to be a quick process," he said. "It depends on how much the parties want to fuss about it."

Meanwhile, non-striking workers at Watsonville Canning are particularly agitated over the delay in counting the votes.

"We want the Teamsters to finally count the votes," said worker Glen Sugarman, who this morning made his third trip to the Register-Pajaronian, along with some 30 co-workers, to complain about the delay. The workers arrived at the newspaper office today in a company bus.

"Can you imagine the frustration of a year of getting beat up, finally getting a chance to vote and they tell us they're not going to count them for two years," he said.

Sugarman was referring to a radio report in which a Teamsters official was quoted as saying it might take two years to settle the outcome of the vote.

"We're not looking forward to crossing the picket line for two years," Sugarman said.

"All we're saying is count the votes," said Doris Smith. "They lost, we won. The only way we're going to prove that is to count it."

"The Teamsters are after power. All we want to do is support our families," Smith said.

"It's necessary to finish up with this situation we're in," Rufina Hernandez said through an interpreter. "We'd like the votes to come out of the box and be counted."

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