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Blogging From the Five Boroughs

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## Cablevision Workers in Brooklyn Vote to Join Union

By *CHRISTOPHER REEVE*

In a 180-to-86 vote on Thursday, Brooklyn's [Cablevision](#) workers unionized and became members of [Communications Workers of America Local 1109](#).

Cablevision's Brooklyn employees, who the union says number 282, became the first of the company's cable television workers to unionize, in what remains a largely union-free industry. Fewer than 4 percent of cable workers nationwide belong to unions, according to the Communication Workers.

Kirsten Luce for The New York Times  
Lawrence Hendrickson, center, at an envelope-stuffing session with union organizers Jan. 12, said that Cablevision would not let workers meet with management to present grievances.

The unionizing drive faced [stiff opposition from Cablevision](#), which started an internal Web site called "Why Union Free?" and required the workers to attend anti-union meetings.

The union hopes to bring the workers' wages in line with those of Verizon workers, who are also represented by the Communications Workers and make more than 30 percent more, the union said. Cablevision workers also say they have been subject to arbitrary discipline and want better health and retirement plans.

Cablevision expressed disappointment with the vote. "In the worst economy in memory, Cablevision has not laid off a single technician," the company said in a statement, "unlike our competitors who have cut thousands of unionized positions."

The Brooklyn workers had voted against joining a union in 2004. Lawrence Hendrickson, an advanced service technician at Cablevision, said he had since tried to set up focus groups at work to allow Cablevision employees to express their concerns and grievances with management. "They said no," he said of management, "because of the union atmosphere."

In this campaign, the unionization effort got outside support. A letter two weeks ago telling the company to "respect Cablevision workers' right to organize free from harassment and intimidation" was signed by Speaker [Christine C. Quinn](#) of the City Council, Public Advocate [Bill de Blasio](#) and the Rev. [Al Sharpton](#), among others.