



## Say It Ain't So (Trader) Joe's: Grocery Chain Workers File Union Petition

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Starbucks. Apple. Both are household brand names and both [have seen the current wave](#) of union organizing [hit their doorsteps](#). We can add the eclectic grocery chain Trader Joe's to the list now.

According to [NPR](#) and other news outlets, employees at a Trader Joe's in Massachusetts have filed the company's first-ever union petition. The NPR report said:

"Workers at a Trader Joe's in western Massachusetts have filed for a union election, following the lead of workers at other companies across the U.S. If the vote is successful, the grocery store in Hadley, Mass., would become the first unionized store in the nationwide chain of more than 500 locations."

The article noted how union organizer Maeg Yosef explained the reasons the workers are seeking a union: "Yosef said concerns about health and safety along with changes in health care and retirement benefits motivated the unionization campaign. According to Yosef, retirement benefits for employees – called 'crew members' – have decreased dramatically over the 18 years she has worked at Trader Joe's. When she started, crew members were guaranteed a 15% retirement contribution from the company each year. While Yosef worked at the store, that decreased to a 10% guarantee until last summer, when the company changed the language in its handbook to state that employees were no longer guaranteed a retirement contribution. Crew members were also required to work more hours a week to maintain health

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insurance, from around 20 to 30.”

Yosef, in the article, described pandemic restrictions, saying they were “robust at the beginning of the pandemic but were lifted ‘as soon as possible,’ causing concern among employees about health and safety.”

It remains to be seen how much support this union drive has, as employees only need 30 percent of the group interested in union representation to sign a petition to get an election. Nevertheless, the current climate may be cause for concern for Trader Joe’s. Indeed, [it has been reported](#) that employees at more than 100 Starbucks locations nationwide have voted in union since the end of last year – and before then, the coffee giant had zero unionized locations.

The ongoing, historic union push underway remains an issue for private sector employers to watch. Companies desiring to remain union-free should consider proactive measures to insulate themselves from organizing efforts, as waiting until such activity is underway may mean it’s too late.