



NLRB Scales Back Smithfield Packing Company Ruling

The National Labor Relations Board has dealt the United Food and Commercial Workers Union a setback in its long-running attempt to organize Smithfield Packing Company's Tar Heel, North Carolina plant. In a decision received by the company on December 30, the Board rejected a slate of remedies imposed on the company in 2000 by an NLRB administrative law judge allowing union organizers extraordinary access to the plant and its employees. The Board left standing a finding that Smithfield Packing had committed a number of unfair labor practices and ordered a new election to be held.

"While we are pleased that the Board rejected the most egregious portions of the hearing officer's order, we believe that the record supported a dismissal," said Richard J. M. Poulson, Executive Vice President and Senior Advisor to the Chairman of Smithfield Foods, Inc., parent company of Smithfield Packing. "We are asking the U. S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals to review the finding that Smithfield Packing was in violation of the NLRA, and also to reconsider the remaining remedies, which we believe still unfairly allow the union to interfere with our employees' freedom of choice."

In 1994 and again in 1997, the employees at the Tar Heel plant voted in secret ballot elections on the question of whether they wanted to be represented by the UFCW. Both times they overwhelmingly rejected the union. The union challenged both elections and in 2000 an NLRB hearing officer agreed with the union. Smithfield Packing appealed the findings to the Board. "Smithfield Packing has good relations with unions in locations where its employees have chosen to unionize in fair and open elections," said Sherrie String, Vice President of Human Resources. "We continue to support our employees' right to choose whether or not to unionize so long as the election process is fair."

Smithfield Packing Company is a subsidiary of Smithfield Foods, Inc. Based in Smithfield, Virginia, Smithfield Foods is the leading processor and marketer of fresh pork and processed meats in the United States, as well as the largest producer of hogs. For more information, please visit www.smithfieldfoods.com.