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IPAs And ILWU? Craft Brewery Unionized For The First Time In The U.S.

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In the last decade, America has seen an explosion of craft breweries around the country. While some of the country's largest breweries, like [Anheuser-Busch](#), have dealt with unions in their workplaces for years, craft breweries generally have operated union-free. Not anymore.

According to Bloomberg Law, [workers at Anchor Brewing Co.](#) in San Francisco – which considers itself to be the country's oldest craft brewery and first domestic brewer of India Pale Ale (IPA) – voted to have the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) represent them in their workplace going forward. The report states:

"Employees at the 123-year-old San Francisco brewer won a March 13 election to form a unit of the [ILWU]. The workers' win takes on extra significance given the beer's iconic reputation in the Bay Area, and the dearth of union presence in the fast-growing craft beer business. The vote to unionize follows a sometimes-tense organizing effort during which the company allegedly held so-called "captive audience meetings" where management advised workers against organizing. The union has also filed a pending unfair labor practice complaint against Anchor for telling some employees to remove pro-union pins from their clothes. Anchor maintained that it has worked collaboratively with the organizers since the process began. The company told *Bloomberg Law* in a Feb. 26 email that the unionization election offered 'the best method by which all workers can

express their choice' and said it planned to 'respect the results' of the election."

Given the rapid rise of craft breweries around the country, it will be interesting to see if more organizing follows suit at other breweries. The National Labor Relations Board's "ambush election rule" remains in effect, [at least for now](#), which means any company desiring to remain union-free must keep its guard up and respond quickly to organizing activity.