

Contact:

JMA: Hailey Allen

(919) 323-7895

hallen@jobstomoveamerica.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



A Power Surge in the Deep South: New Flyer's Alabama Plant Electrifies Labor Rights Movement

Workers at Major Alabama EV Manufacturing Plant Secure Historic Collective Bargaining Agreement Amidst Growing Labor Momentum in the South

ANNISTON, Ala. – In a pace-setting victory for workers' rights and the advancement of a new, stronger, clean-energy economy, workers at New Flyer of America Inc. – the country's largest manufacturer of electric transit buses – have announced the ratification of a life-changing union contract at the company's plant in Anniston, Ala. This ratification comes on the heels of the Company's voluntary recognition of the union chosen by a majority of the workers on January 31, 2024.

The workers overwhelmingly voted to ratify the contract under the representation of the International Union of Electronic, Electrical, Salaried, Machine, and Furniture Workers-Communications Workers of America (IUE-CWA). The move comes after years of organizing in Alabama by IUE-CWA, Jobs to Move America (JMA), Greater Birmingham Ministries (GBM), and other groups comprising the Alabama Coalition for Community Benefits. Together with the union, the coalition negotiated a groundbreaking Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) in 2022, advancing racial and gender equity while ensuring a more inclusive workforce in Anniston. Three other New Flyer plants have also recently organized and ratified life-changing union contracts. These facilities are in Anniston, AL (Carfair), Shepherdsville, Kentucky, and Jamestown, New York.

Now, more than 1200 workers will be covered by the Alabama contract and union contracts recently ratified by New Flyer workers at plants in Kentucky and New York. These contracts include life-changing wage increases and other improvements to working conditions. The jobs

are largely supported by the bipartisan infrastructure law which invested \$5 billion into electric buses. This decision to unionize and to ratify the new contract comes amidst a groundswell of labor wins in the historically anti-union South. Earlier this month, workers at Volkswagen in Chattanooga, Tenn., overwhelmingly voted to unionize with the United Auto Workers (UAW). The New Flyer Kentucky plant workers opted to unionize in 2023, and workers at Mercedes plants in Vance, Alabama, are voting on unionization this week.

“It’s a very interesting job,” said DeAndré Brown, who started working at New Flyer in November 2023. “I’d never heard of this company before until my dad started working up here, but it’s pretty cool to me getting to make the modes of transportation for people. I used to ride buses like these when I lived in Memphis, Tennessee, and it’s pretty cool to be a part of building them from the ground up.”

In addition to provisions aimed at promoting measurable hiring and promotion goals to ensure people from historically disadvantaged groups are offered jobs and opportunities for promotion, New Flyer is also committed to creating a pre-apprenticeship program that will provide necessary training and support for applicants striving toward apprenticeship opportunities. This initiative underscores the company’s dedication to investing in its workforce’s growth and professional development, ensuring that all employees have access to pathways for upward mobility and success.

“I think everybody should dream a little bigger and want a little more themselves,” said Shannon Franks, who started working at New Flyer in June 2023 after completing a year-long addiction recovery program in Anniston. Franks has been in recovery for two years now. “When you work hard, you want nice things because you work hard for what you’ve got. Just because we live in Alabama doesn’t mean we don’t have the same dreams and ambitions that they do everywhere else in the United States. I felt defeated over addiction for 27 years and I know God doesn’t want me to feel defeated anymore.”

As a uniquely positioned nonprofit organization and strategic policy center with deep roots in Alabama, Jobs to Move America (JMA) has been instrumental in helping workers achieve this outcome. Through its innovative approach to negotiating community benefits agreements, JMA diligently protects worker rights while advocating for racial and economic justice in the region and across the country.

Community benefits agreements are private agreements between community groups and employers to create new job standards and equity measures. Paired with strong union organizing agreements, CBAs can clear the path for Southerners to organize Southerners and win strong union contracts with little resistance. In the Deep South, workers will rightfully demand higher wages, safer workplaces, and all the benefits a union can bring to their community.

“For once, finally, there’s an energy in the South where people are realizing that we are worth more. They’re willing to stand together to build that power that’s necessary, and it’s really exciting to watch,” said Larry Hodge, community engagement coordinator for JMA’s Southern Program. “In Alabama, as a right-to-work state, it’s so heavy on these workers; but now, the beauty of it is they can see that even though we’re a right-to-work state you still have these rights — these federal rights, protective rights — where you can do this and organize a union in the workplace. Their labor’s not worth any less than any other region in this country.”

Overall, the years of collaboration between community groups, labor and industry at New Flyer’s Alabama facility serves as a model for fostering mutually beneficial partnerships in key growth sectors of the renewable energy and electric vehicle manufacturing economy. By prioritizing the needs and aspirations of workers, New Flyer and its employees are setting a new standard for responsible corporate citizenship and inclusive economic development.

“The workers in Anniston have just sent a powerful message to the South and the rest of the country: Alabama workers can win, too, and they can win it all,” said Will Tucker, Southern Director for Jobs to Move America.

About Jobs to Move America (jobstomoveamerica.org)

Jobs to Move America is a strategic policy center that works to transform public spending and corporate behavior using a comprehensive approach that is rooted in racial and economic justice and community organizing. We seek to advance a fair and prosperous economy with good jobs and healthier communities for all.

###