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Silicon Valley private security guards win union representation

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In what union officials described as Silicon Valley's largest private sector organizing effort, 3,000 private security guards on high tech campuses like Facebook, Cisco and Genentech have won recognition as members of Service Employees International Union-United Service Workers West (SEIU-USWW).

Saturday's announcement was the latest in a series of successful organizing campaigns of contract service workers including janitors, food service workers and bus drivers serving large tech companies.



DAVID PAUL MORRIS/BLOOMBERG

Private security guards working on several Silicon Valley companies, like at Facebook's headquarters in Menlo Park, have gained union representation.

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"Silicon Valley, home to the world's most prosperous tech companies, suffers from a devastating level of income inequality and this organizing victory is key to closing that gap," said Ben Field, executive officer of the South Bay AFL-CIO Labor Council.

The announcement does not mean the security guards have union contracts, only that SEIU-USWW will now begin negotiations with the security firms that employ them and provide security services to tech companies.

However, in the past two years, 8,000 janitors represented by SEIU-USWW successfully negotiated a master agreement with 23 Bay Area janitorial service employers and drivers with Compass Transportation, which contracts bus services to Apple, and Loop Transportation, which contracts with Facebook, joined the Teamsters.

In addition to winning organizing efforts, three union-backed ballot measures on last November's ballot won more than 60 percent of the vote in Santa Clara County including Measure E, which requires businesses employing 35 or more to offer extra working hours to their part-time employees before hiring new ones.

Working Partnerships USA, a think tank affiliated with the labor council, published a study called "Tech's Invisible Workforce" last March that said the number of Silicon Valley jobs in subcontracted industries had grown three times as fast as local employment overall. The percentage of black and Latino workers in

subcontracted jobs was six times higher (58 percent to 10 percent) in subcontracted jobs than directly employed by tech companies and the average annual pay in subcontracted jobs of \$19,900 was less than the median annual Silicon Valley rent of \$21,444.

Jody Meacham

Reporter

Silicon Valley Business Journal

