“Statement of Volkswagen Group of America- BHRRC Question Regarding Cattanooga”, 28 September 2020

Volkswagen of America respects the right of our employees to decide the question of union representation. In the first union election in Chattanooga in 2014, the UAW sought a “plant-wide” unit including maintenance and production employees. VW provided the UAW with unprecedented access to employees and maintained a stance of neutrality on the question of unionization. This included allowing UAW International Representatives to come into the plant and directly address employees which is quite unusual in the US. The voters spoke.

With respect to the 2015 election, the UAW attempted to organize a “maintenance-only” unit, even though UAW had just conceded in the prior election that a plant-wide unit was appropriate. Because the NLRB itself was divided on the question, Volkswagen took the necessary steps to have the matter reviewed by the appropriate United States Circuit Court of Appeals, which was VW’s right under both U.S law and custom. Volkswagen’s position regarding the legal issue of an appropriate unit for collective bargaining was a position not only shared by the vast majority of employers, but the position adopted by the NLRB for many years, until a sudden (and ultimately temporary) reversal by the NLRB. In order to preserve its legal rights, Volkswagen could not agree to the UAW’s bargaining and recognition request at that time. Ultimately, in a recent decision involving the Boeing company, Volkswagen’s position was confirmed as correct by the NLRB.

In 2019 the UAW petitioned for an election in one plant-wide unit as it did in 2014. The Company maintained that the UAW could not seek an election in a larger unit while the election in the smaller, maintenance unit was still outstanding. The UAW agreed, withdrew any interest in representing the workers in the smaller unit and proceeded to the most recent election. Again, VW of America was neutral on the question of unionization. The voters once again exercised their right to vote and decided not to unionize.