

Contractors Allege Discrimination Against Non-Union Apprentices

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By Emily Alpert

I just got a copy of the lawsuit that the local chapter of the Associated General Contractors has filed against San Diego Unified. You can check it out for yourself by clicking [here](#).

The group alleges that the project labor agreement that the school district adopted on its \$2.1 billion facilities bond violates the law by favoring apprentices from union programs. Here is a segment explaining that provision from an old article I wrote:

Apprentices will be hired first from union programs, which advocates contend have higher graduation rates and a more diverse membership than other apprenticeship programs, largely because they link apprentices directly to jobs.

"If you go with an open (non-union) shop, you have a resume and you have to go looking for work," said Corinne Wilson, a research and policy analyst with the Center on Policy Initiatives, a left-leaning think tank. "This gives you a job."

Non-union apprentices disputed their claims and contended that giving priority to union apprentices was discriminatory. Glenn Hillegas, who sits on the oversight committee and oversees apprenticeship programs for the Associated General Contractors, said he felt the school board had made the decision without good data on the programs he oversaw.

"You are discriminating against over 150 apprentices who live and work in San Diego by adopting this project labor agreement," said Richard Markuson, a lobbyist for the Western Electrical Contractors Association.

The lawsuit argues that the policy conflicts with California law because it "eliminates and impermissibly restricts participation on the Projects for all apprenticeship programs in California for training under their standards ... except certain identified programs hand-picked by the District." A news release from the group called the practice discriminatory and illegal.

The Center on Policy Initiatives, a left-leaning think tank, countered with a news release charging that the AGC was "wasting taxpayer dollars and municipal resources with baseless legal threats" over issues that already been settled in court. Here's an excerpt from their press release:

"This obstructionist effort could not come at a more damaging time," said Antonio Pizano, President/CEO of MAAC Project. "Like the earlier, merit-less lawsuit they filed against Caltrans, the AGC's position puts the contractors' desire for profits ahead of the community's needs."