



## **Non-Union Contractors Sue S.D. Unified Over Prop. S**

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***By Ana Tintocalis***

A non-union construction contractors group is suing the San Diego Unified School District over how money is spent on Proposition S school bond projects.

A divided San Diego Unified school board voted about three months ago to give unionized labor millions of dollars worth in repair and renovation projects under Prop. S, the district's \$2.1 billion school bond measure.

Now the local chapter of the Associated General Contractors of America, representing non-union contractors, is suing the district.

The contractors group is trying to overturn the labor agreement by using a state law they say requires all public works projects to employ state-approved apprentices connected with unions and non-union construction companies.

Jim Ryan with the Association General Contractors says the district's deal is illegal.

"Really, our goal here is to stop the discrimination of our apprentices," Ryan said. "If they can figure out a way to write (the agreement) to include our apprentices in, more power to (the school district officials). But they have to include our apprentices and the people they work for."

Millions of dollars are at a stake at a time when construction has slowed. Pro-union supporters call the lawsuit an "obstructionist effort" by contractor lobbyists. They say its wasting taxpayer dollars.

Stephanie Monroe with the Center on Policy Initiatives says non-union apprentices are not being shut-out. She says what is happening is the district is giving unions priority because their training programs graduate 92 percent of the state's construction apprentices.

"When you are with an non-union apprenticeship program, you might be with this job for one to two years, but then after you're done with that job, they kick you out of the (training) program, or you're no longer in the program," Monroe said. "So most of their apprenticeship students never graduate."

The contractors group disputes that. They want the district to change or end the agreement.