

Senator threatened 'guns-a-blazing' if NLRB moved on Boeing

GOP lawmakers have launched nearly 50 attacks on the NLRB this year alone

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) threatened to come out with “full guns a-blazing” against the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) if NLRB acting General Counsel Lafe Solomon issued a complaint against the Boeing Co., which is accused of moving production away from its state of Washington facility in retaliation for the workers exercising their right to strike. The threat was made nine days before the NLRB issued the complaint April 20.

Graham's threats were revealed in Solomon's notes on the phone call that The Hill newspaper obtained through the Freedom of Information Act. In those notes Solomon writes:

“He said that if a complaint was filed, it will be very, very, nasty... He said that if a complaint was issued he was going ‘full guns a-blazing.’”

Since the complaint was issued, Republican lawmakers have threatened to cut the NLRB's funding, block nominations to the board, and impose new laws to curtail its authority.

Solomon's notes on the case also reveal that Boeing General Counsel Mike Luttig threatened to bring congressional pressure if the NLRB issued a complaint.

“He told me ... he would go to the Hill to prevent me from litigating the case... I said that I had the CEO on tape saying that the move to SC was not because of economics but because of the Machinists strike. I said I had a triable case and that I would do whatever I thought was right under the NLRA [National Labor Relations Act].”

In a letter released Nov. 9 about Graham's and Boeing's threats, Rep. Elijah Cummings (D-Md.), the ranking Democrat on the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee said:

“No corporation should be able to discriminate against American workers and then avoid accountability for its actions by using its political influence in Congress to seek to undermine the rule of law. These new documents raise serious concerns that this may be exactly what happened in this case.”

In 2011 alone, Republicans have launched nearly 50 attacks on the NLRB and the NLRA.

“They've introduced 24 bills and amendments; approved one continuing resolution; held eight hearings; and tied up the agency with eight threatening letters, four official requests for documents, and one subpoena — none of which created a single job,” said Zoe Bridges-Curry of American Rights at Work, a nonprofit advocacy organization promoting the freedom of workers to organize unions and bargain collectively with employers. “So it's clear that their ultimate aim is to eliminate the rights and protections that ensure the 99 percent a fair shake in the workplace.”

“The assaults on workers' rights come at a time when most Americans

say jobs are the nation's No. 1 priority,” the AFL-CIO said.

Currently, Republicans who control the U.S. House are trying to defund the NLRB and ban the Board from acting in a half dozen different fields of labor relations.

House Labor Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Denny Rehberg (R-Mont.) inserted the bans over the protests of the panel's top Democrat, Rosa DeLauro (D-Conn.) She defended the NLRB and workers. And she said Rehberg isn't even letting other legislators work on the measure, making them “bystanders” to his ideology.

The NLRB riders that Rehberg inserted would:

- Reaffirm federal labor law's 76-year-old ban on covering farmworkers — and extend it to “employees engaged in the maintenance and operation of ditches, canals, reservoirs, and waterways” where 95 percent of the water goes for farms.

- Ban the NLRB's proposal to force more disclosure by — and enforce rules on — what Rehberg calls “persuaders” and labor calls union-busters.

- Ban money to approve creation of “micro-unions,” an idea floated by several labor law professors.

- Ban the board from issuing any decision to change the Bush-era standard for secret-ballot elections.

- Ban “electronic, remote or absentee voting” in union representation elections, forcing all the votes to be cast onsite. Putting all voting onsite gives employers another shot at taking names of union supporters for later discipline, harassment or firing.

- Ban money for the NLRB's proposal to streamline union recognition election processes, including consolidating all the complaints in one hearing.

- Ban the notice, which the NLRB has already promulgated, telling employers they must put up agency-provided free posters informing workers of their rights to join — or not join — unions. The NLRB has delayed final implementation of that rule until Jan. 31.

- Exempt “small businesses” from labor law coverage. DeLauro pointed out that under the Small Business Administration's definition of “small business,” which Rehberg adopted, a firm could have up to 1,000 workers and be exempt.

Republicans also have proposed a 17 percent cut — \$49 million — in the

NLRB budget.

“If these documents represent the position Chairman Rehberg intends to take into negotiations with the Senate, it looks like we're in for a long, difficult process,” DeLauro commented. “The Rehberg draft injects a whole host of new, contentious legislative issues into the process, most of them quite extraneous to the task at hand.”

While Rehberg's draft bill, with all its anti-worker provisions, has yet to get through the GOP-run House Appropriations Committee, the Democratic-run Senate Appropriations panel approved its money bill — including NLRB funds — last month.

(Editor's Note: Mike Hall of the AFL-CIO NOW News Blog and Press Associates Inc. contributed to this report.)

Take your message further, occupiers

To The Editor:

The Occupy Portland movement did a great job of drawing our attention to the social inequities resulting from corruption, double standards, and abuse of power in American politics and commerce. But with the appearance of drug dealers, arsonists, and sanitation issues, the occupation of public-owned spaces should end. We need to take the original positive message further in our individual day-to-day thoughts, social exchanges, and actions. Every day we need to reaffirm why we think what we think, with a focus on the 2012 elections.

With our consumer dollars we should help grow small, locally owned — therefore locally accountable — businesses. Large corporations may employ thousands, but they hold those jobs hostage in return for corporate welfare in the form of tax breaks and/or subsidies. Government and corporations should be accountable to us, not vice versa. And with the upcoming election cycle, let's do our best to remind government that it's supposed to govern for us, not over us.

**Steve Weaser
NALC Branch 82
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'Occupiers' show true colors

To The Editor:

Labor's support of the Occupy Portland demonstration has ultimately been revealed as knee-jerk and misguided at best. Whereas the “movement” spirited itself as representing “the 99%” and highly critical of big business, it has now shown its true colors and is demonstrating against the Keystone pipeline project — a critical construction project for America and her workers. Perhaps those who oppose Keystone consider the highly-skilled plumbers, pipefitters,

OPEN FORUM

and pipeliners who will work on the pipeline as part of the 1%. Tell that to the unemployed on our hiring list.

**Ron Murray
UA Local 290 (Retired)
Portland**

End Bush tax cuts

Statement by AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka on Republican proposal to permanently extend Bush tax cuts.

“On Nov. 9, Republicans on the so-called “Super Committee” proposed lowering tax rates for the richest Americans while cutting hundreds of billions of dollars in Social Security and Medicare benefits that middle class Americans depend on. This is Robin Hood in reverse: class warfare against the American middle class on behalf of the top 1 percent.

“You can't use budget deficits as an excuse to cut middle class benefits one minute, and the next minute propose making the deficit worse by lowering tax rates for rich people. After all, Bush tax cuts are the number one reason why projected deficits are so high over the next 10 years. If we want to bring down the federal deficit, we have to start by letting the Bush tax cuts for the wealthy expire on schedule. Haven't Republicans noticed that Americans from every walk of life are fed up with this constant catering to the demands of the 1 percent? This is the same kind of tone-deaf overreaching on behalf of the 1 percent that voters in Ohio overwhelmingly rejected yesterday. Democrats on the Super Committee should firmly come out against this proposal and stand with the 99 percent of Americans who are demanding change.”

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