

Busted!

A sampler of recent charges of employer labor law violations at the local office of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).

Vancouver Hilton to be converted to office space

If workers vote to boycott the **Hilton Vancouver and Convention Center**, it will go bankrupt, shut down, lose the Hilton flag, and be converted to an office building. That's a remarkable claim considering that the facility is publicly owned. But that's what workers — members of **UNITE HERE Local 9** — were told by management in the days leading up to a boycott vote, according to charges the union filed Dec. 2. Local 9 accuses Hilton management of interfering with its internal process — a vote on whether to boycott the hotel, nearly six months after the union contract expired. Managers threatened unspecified reprisals, scheduled employees to work during the boycott vote, escorted them to the vote and remained there while they voted, and even gave workers donuts for voting “no.” The boycott proposal, recommended by union leaders, lost 57-49. Since then, one outspoken union activist at the hotel, telephone operator Lucas Fielder, was fired Dec. 21, a day after he spoke out at a protest vigil.

Crackdown at St. Charles

St. Charles Medical Center in Bend sounds like a dictatorship in a case filed last month by **Service Employees International Union Local 49**. Workers at St. Charles — Central Oregon's largest hospital — voted in January 2011 to join Local 49. Since then, management has tried to impose new rules without the consent of the workers or their union, including no-solicitation rules, no-talk rules, no-access rules, and rules against the wearing or distribution of union insignia. Union activists have resisted, says spokesperson Felisa Hagins, but have also been targeted for warnings of potential discipline for carrying out union activities. Management has also interfered with workers' right to have a union rep present at disciplinary meetings. And employees attending union activities have been surveilled by management. Hagins says workers are uncowed, however. In November, they voted down a contract offer from management that the union was not endorsing. Bargaining continues, with dates set for late January.

Union? What union?

At **Tidewater Barge Lines** in Vancouver, workers are represented by the **Inland Boatmen's Union**, a division of **International Longshore and Warehouse Union**. But of late, the employer has been acting as if the union is out to sea, according to charges filed Dec. 19. Tidewater has been bargaining directly with workers about disciplinary matters, working out “return to work” agreements with disciplined workers, and without notifying the union. In September, a worker was fired for allegedly failing to comply with such an agreement. That's out of line, says IBU in the charge.

New NLRB union election rule to take effect April 30

WASHINGTON, D.C. — A new rule on the way union elections are conducted will take effect April 30, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) announced late last month. The rule will help alleviate the delays, inefficiencies, abuse of process, and unnecessary litigation which plague the current system for workers who want to vote on whether to have a union.

AFL-CIO President Richard

Trumka says it's “good news” that the NLRB “has taken this modest but important step to help ensure that workers who want to vote to form a union at their workplace get a fair opportunity to do so.”

The new rule, says NLRB Chairman Mark Pearce, gives workers who have petitioned for an election the “right to vote in a timely manner and without the impediment of needless litigation.”

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