

Lee, Chris

From: Bauman, Robert
Sent: Thursday, March 6, 2025 1:51 PM
To: Lee, Chris
Subject: Fwd: Citizen Action Letter on Trade Hotel Union Busting

Please add to two deer district files.

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Robert Kraig <robert.kraig@citizenactionwi.org>
Date: March 6, 2025 at 1:16:28 PM CST
To: Robert Kraig <robert.kraig@citizenactionwi.org>
Subject: Citizen Action Letter on Trade Hotel Union Busting



March 6, 2025

Dear Mayor Johnson and Milwaukee Common Council Members,

Citizen Action of Wisconsin supports workers exercising their fundamental human right to form and maintain unions. This is especially important for service and hospitality workers trapped in a low road economy. For these workers a union contract can transform employment and their lives. It can also expand the revenue base for cash strapped local governments in high poverty areas.

Only through collective bargaining can workers in the service sector, particularly the hospitality industry, secure living wages, decent benefits, healthy and safe working conditions, adequate hours and predictable schedules, fair treatment instead of arbitrary decision, and a meaningful voice on the job. Absent a union and a contract, tens of thousands of Milwaukee residents who work in these jobs, particularly Black folks and other people of color, struggle to support themselves and their families, holding back our neighborhoods, our economy and our city.

Citizen Action of Wisconsin strongly opposes employers engaging in union-busting both lawful or unlawful. The right to form a union is a choice of workers and workers alone. It is wrong for employers to use intimidation, coercion and scare tactics to dissuade workers from exercising a fundamental right! When employers violate workers' rights, and even the law, they also deny opportunity and security to the working people of our city and deny the proud legacy of Milwaukee as a union town. This holds back Milwaukee, preventing equitable and shared prosperity.

During this past year workers employed at the Trade Hotel by NCG Hospitality sought to form a union with the Milwaukee Area Service and Hospitality Workers Union. Even though a super-majority of workers there had signed union membership cards with MASH, the company fought against them, and based on the available evidence violated the workers' rights and the law.

NCG Hospitality used every delay tactic they could muster to slow down the National Labor Relations Board process. There is strong evidence that they leaned on bureaucratic delays and procedural hassles along with a weak enforcement structure during the election period, combined with lies, deception and misdirection about unions and collective bargaining in their propaganda to workers. Too many employers like NCG Hospitality turn what should be a free and fair election into a mockery of democracy. I am concerned that the company may have even crossed the line into outright violations of the federal laws intended to safeguard union rights. The company is under federal investigation with charges pending.

It did not have to be this way. NCG Hospitality should have followed the lead of other employers in the Deer District by recognizing the union based upon a card count and remaining neutral throughout the process of unionization and first contract bargaining. The landmark community benefits agreement for other service and hospitality workers in the Deer District, which built upon the work of our Good Jobs, Livable Neighborhoods program, came from a simple premise that should apply here: where taxpayer subsidies create the conditions for development, the employment that results -- from construction to end-use -- should be good, union jobs that redound to the benefit of the people.

Hotel development in the Deer District, from the Trade to the proposed Moxy, would not exist but for \$200 million in State funds for the arena, \$10 million of County land giveaways, and over \$50 million of City subsidies. This kind of taxpayer investment should not lead to low-wage, no benefit, insecure employment and a labor dispute from union-busting. We note that the City has a financial stake at play, too: revenue from the City-owned garage could be adversely impacted by this labor dispute escalating further.

Now is the time for city leaders to settle the labor dispute and ensure workers' rights and dignity in hospitality properties of the Deer District that exist solely because of taxpayer subsidies. City leaders should act now. Given the chaos in federal agencies like the National Labor Relations Board wrought by the Trump Administration, the process could otherwise take months or years, especially if NCG Hospitality litigates the matter. In the meanwhile, absent intervention, workers, their families, and the people of Milwaukee will lose -- and union-busting will be rewarded.

We call on you to intervene to settle this dispute and resolve the matter. City policy-makers should protect the financial interests at stake with the labor dispute. They should advance the public interest in good jobs in the hospitality industry.

We ask that you ensure settlement of the labor dispute between NCG Hospitality and MASH prior to any further consideration of the company's request for city action.

Sincerely,

Robert Kraig

Dr. Robert Kraig, Ph.D.

Executive Director, Citizen Action of Wisconsin

"The very meaning of history is to be found in the struggle for community"

James Luther Adams

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