

BUSINESS

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Union pickets school builders

by Ry Rivard
Daily Mail Capitol Reporter

CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- About 15 union representatives picketed the state School Building Authority office in Charleston on Thursday to demand the agency do more to make sure West Virginia workers get work on state-funded projects.

The picketers from the Affiliated Construction Trades Foundation arrayed themselves along the 2300 block of Kanawha Boulevard for about two hours Thursday morning.

They waved printed signs that read "Demand Local Jobs For Local Workers" and handwritten signs that said "Manchin: Hire Local Workers," a reference to building authority executive director Mark Manchin.

"We are spending state taxpayer money; we should be supporting local workers," said union representative Wayne Rebich.

The union's ire is directed at Bluefield-based Frye Roofing Inc.

Rebich faulted the company for hiring "95 percent or more" of its workers from out of state, specifically North Carolina, and said there was a "good possibility" some of them were illegal immigrants.

Last month, the union alleged during a meeting with Manchin that the company has hired undocumented workers. The union said it had obtained 31 workers' Social Security numbers and that 24 of those numbers didn't match up with the workers claiming them.

J.C. Robinson, president of Frye Roofing, which is a non-union shop, has taken issue with the allegations.

He said Thursday the number of people he employs from out of state is not nearly as high as the union alleges and he says he does not know that the company has hired illegal immigrants, though he said there is a chance the company has "made a mistake."

Robinson said he looks for the most efficient workers it can find. That allows him to keep his prices down and, in the end, saves taxpayers money.

"Some of those happen to live in North Carolina - certainly not all," Robinson said.

He later added, "The concept that they have said '95 percent or more' is totally inaccurate."

Robinson said he couldn't ever know for sure if the company employed an illegal immigrant.

"Do I know specifically that we have made a mistake? No. Is there a chance we have? Yes." Robinson said.

He added, "We have no evidence or knowledge that we have made mistakes in that process."

Manchin said he had informed federal immigration officials about the union's allegations.

In a letter he wrote to the immigration agency, he said there "does appear to be some valid concerns," Manchin said, quoting from the letter in a telephone interview Thursday.

He said he had not yet heard back from immigration officials.

Still, Manchin said, most people working on jobs are West Virginians.

"The vast, vast majority of people working in jobs throughout West Virginia are West Virginians," he said.

Robinson suggested the union was targeting the company.

"I think it's pretty simple - it's not different really than Pepsi and Coke," he said.

Robinson added, "At the end of the day we haven't done anything wrong, and we really don't have any reason to go on the offensive. And they're not going to stop, because that's their job."

Jesse James, a member of ACT Local 185 in Charleston, said each job that someone out of state takes is one that is lost to West Virginia and that somebody should do something about it.

"They're still letting them work for the state," James said. "And they're putting us out of work."

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Posted By: **WEST VIRGINIAN** (2 hours ago)

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Actually it is all about the "Davis/Bacon Act", whereas Employers have to pay the workers the average wage of the area.

The Union Bosses twist the intent of the law, and expect that only Union Workers that pay dues for their salaries, to get work with Govt.

Posted By: **sfgacpt3** (3 hours ago)

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While their at it the should also picket Charleston Housing for their usage of almost all out of state workers and illegal aliens to build the new townhouses in Charleston.

Posted By: **dumb hillbilly** (3 hours ago)

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When I hire someone I am required by law to make a copy of their drivers license and keep it on file, to show that they are a legal worker. Does the roofing company not have to follow the same law?

Posted By: **happyhowie** (3 hours ago)

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hey wv. workers

if you make your lawmakers start using E-verivied law these illegals could not work in wv. what part of this don't you understand ??