Charges Filed Against Union Officials

Local 45 Members file complaints with IBEW International Vice President

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LOS ANGELES, CA - Three members of International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) have filed charges with the IBEW International Vice President against IBEW Local 45. Russ Bellenot, Kevin Breslin, and Robert Arkow, all employees of the City of Los Angeles, Information Technology Agency, filed the charges with the office of IBEW 9th District International Vice President, Michael Mowrey.

According to the IBEW Constitution, "All charges against an officer or representative of a local union must be presented in writing, signed by the charging party, and, specify the section or sections of this Constitution, the bylaws, rules or working agreement violated." The charges must be filed with the International Vice President of the district involved.

All three members have filed written charges with Mowrey, claiming that Union Officials violated parts of the IBEW Constitution and Local 45 by-laws.

Breslin, who works at Los Angeles International Airport as a communications electrician, has charged IBEW Local 45 Business Manager, Lloyd Webster with failing to hold a monthly meeting, which according to the IBEW Constitution, could lead to the revocation of the Local's charter with the union.

"I have filed charges against Lloyd Webster for refusing to hold a regular scheduled monthly meeting on Wednesday, November 15, 2006, when there was a quorum of members in good standing present," said Breslin. "The IBEW has contacted me and informed me that my charges have been responded to. I have requested to be informed of that response and am waiting on a decision if I am to be given the response and an update of the process."

Local 45 member Russ Bellenot is charging union officials with failure to follow parliamentary rules as required by the IBEW Constitution. In his complaint, Bellenot alleges that President Victor Marrero and all elected Local 45 officials present at the October 25, 2006 general membership meeting failed to enforce Local 45 by-laws or the IBEW Constitution's rules regarding parliamentary procedure.
Robert Arkow, a former steward of Local 45, filed by far the largest complaint to the IBEW International Vice President. In a 20 page complaint, and 12 pages of exhibits, Arkow has charged union officials with offenses similar to the ones filed by Bellenot and Breslin, as well as fraud, fraud concealment and not having an assistant business manager to represent the public sector, as required by Local 45's by-laws.

The fraud and fraud concealment charges stem from Arkow's discovery of a National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) ruling where Local 45 was found guilty of unfair labor practices in the handling of an attempt to decertify the union by workers at Adelphia cable. Arkow contends that the membership was not informed of the NLRB ruling at a time when there was a decertification pending against the Los Angeles Building Trades Council. That decertification effort was withdrawn in September 2005, when it was discovered that decertifying the Building Trades Council would have led to the decertification of Local 45 as well.

"I go to union meetings to be informed about what is happening with the Local. I shouldn't find out about such things on the Internet," said Arkow. "When I first discovered the information while surfing the 'net, my first thoughts were that somehow I had missed the announcement at the local meetings, but after checking with several other Local 45 members who are regular attendees of the Union’s Local meetings, I realized that this was not the case."

Arkow alleges in his complaint that, "Had members at the City of Los Angeles known that the Department of Labor had cited Local 45 for unfair labor practices, the Public Safety Technology Council might not have withdrawn the decertification petitions." He also alleges that the union’s management hid the NLRB decision from the general membership nine months before the union's scheduled elections, and as a result of the withheld information, the election’s outcome might have been different.

"Just because charges have filed against Local 45 officials, this does not mean that they are guilty of any wrongdoing," said Arkow. "I believe in the IBEW Constitution and expect that Mr. Mowrey will investigate these charges thoroughly and make a ruling based on his investigation. Before one jumps to conclusions, let's give the process time to work. In the end, I believe that the IBEW International will do the right thing."

Written and telephone requests for comments from Webster and Mowrey were not responded to.

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