

Carpenters union pickets airport

By Kristopher Hanson, Staff Writer

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A member of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters & Joiners of America Union who refused to be identified joins other union members as the protest the City of Long Beach and Erik Sund of the city's Business Relations Bureau in front of Long Beach (Calif.) Airport on October 3, 2011. (Jeff Gritchen / Staff Photographer)

PHOTO GALLERY

LONG BEACH - More than 120 carpenters and tradesmen began picketing Long Beach Airport on Monday, saying they were excluded from a \$29 million terminal modernization project.

The group began their protest at 7 a.m. and plan to visit Long Beach City Council tonight to press for their inclusion in an existing project labor agreement or a similar deal for their members.

The agreement was signed between the airport and more than 20 trade unions in 2010, providing local hiring provisions, apprenticeship programs, health care and benefits for workers and a no-strike pledge, among other measures.

Dan Macdonald, a representative with Carpenter's Union Local 1506, said members are being discriminated against for not signing the PLA. The union represents thousands of workers in Southern California and helped build the airport's new parking garage, local seaport terminal renovations, school construction and other public projects.

"We feel we're being singled out and excluded simply for not submitting to the (agreement) hammered out between the L.A.-Orange County Building and Trades Council and the airport," Macdonald said. "We're seeking a parallel PLA with the airport to ensure our workers get a fair deal."

Airport officials, however, said a separate agreement is impossible.

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"Funding

is federally regulated and, therefore, this project must follow all applicable federal standards and requirements of the Federal Aviation Administration," said airport spokeswoman Kerry Gerot. "The executed Project Labor Agreement does not allow for any side labor agreements to be executed separately."

They vow to continue modernization - with or without the carpenters guild.

The airport is investing more than \$130 million in terminal upgrades, new passenger concourses, parking, runway improvements and security.

The agreement prevents strikes and requires contractors meet budgets and timelines. Airport modernization is expected to employ some 1,000 workers through 2013.

City officials urged protestors to join the more than 20 other unions who have signed onto the agreement.

"These are quality, fair wage jobs during a very difficult economic climate," Gerot said. "The city supports all forms of free speech and the right to assemble, however, the work on the terminal (modernization) will continue due to the provisions in the existing project labor agreement that prohibit work stoppages."

Macdonald said dozens of carpenters will take their case before the city council at tonight's meeting, scheduled to begin at 5 p. m. at 333 W. Ocean Blvd. in Long Beach.

"We wish it hadn't come to this, given our record of completing projects on time and under budget, but this is where we're at," Macdonald said. "The protests will continue until we can settle on a fair deal."

To learn more about airport modernization, go to www.lgb.org.

The carpenters website is www.swcarpenters.org.

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