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## EDITORIALS

### Workforce Agreement A Bad Idea Any Time

The Santa Fe City Council is considering a temporary hold on the stealth "community workforce agreement" ordinance it passed in February. Rather than delaying this act of political pandering to labor unions by the mayor and council, the council should repeal it outright.

A city memo describes the agreement as a "pre-hire collective bargaining agreement that sets out in detail the terms of employment and hiring for all workers on large-scale public works construction projects." All workers on a project governed by a community workforce agreement must belong to a union, though they can join just for the duration of a project.

Mayor David Coss — who was endorsed by more than a dozen unions in his losing bid to succeed Ben Lujan in the Legislature — says, "The goal of the community workforce agreement is to locally provide better wages, safer working conditions and a career path for our labor force."

That is a ridiculous argument. Existing laws require companies that win contracts for construction work in cities, counties and states through competitive bidding to pay the prevailing wage and other benefits. And legions of regulations exist to deal with safety and other working conditions.

Roxanne Rivera-Wiest, the president of the Associated Builders and Contractors of New Mexico, says the ordinance is "a special-interest scheme that discourages competition from nonunion contractors and their workers" and could raise the cost of public works projects by 20 percent. She says some 92 percent of contractors in New Mexico aren't union and predicts that because of the ordinance few would want to bid on large-scale projects in Santa Fe.

Even in the best of times decreasing competition and increasing prices is a bad idea, and this ordinance appears likely to do both.

And, it's simply unfair to construction companies trying to stay alive in a tough economy. Anyone should be free to join a union. You shouldn't have to have a union to bid on a taxpayer-funded job.