



Kriss Worthington

Councilmember, City of Berkeley, District 7

2180 Milvia Street, 5th Floor, Berkeley, CA 94704

PHONE 510-981-7170 FAX 510-981-7177 kworthington@ci.berkeley.ca.us

CONSENT CALENDAR

November 27, 2007

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Councilmember Kriss Worthington

Subject: Opposing the Lockout of Workers at Metro Lighting

RECOMMENDATION:

Express opposition to the lockout of workers at Metro Lighting in Berkeley.

BACKGROUND:

While Metro Lighting claims that it is “socially and environmentally correct”, it has at the same time been engaging in unfair labor practices. Over the past five months employees at Metro Lighting have been taking collective action with the International Workers of the World (IWW) to improve their working conditions. Employees are fighting for a sustainable wage for all workers, safe working conditions and an end to age discrimination, which resulted in thousands of dollars of lost wages to one worker in his 60s.

In response to these efforts the company has refused to negotiate with employees over their demands and has actively tried to stop their organizing efforts. They have not only hired union-busting attorneys, they have also harassed employees, and changed working conditions requiring different hours and taking away health care benefits. They have also been exposed an unsafe environment and when a union employee complained about a leak of caustic alkaline they were fired.

Despite these actions, the employees continued to organize until they were unfairly locked out on August 9th. Since then the IWW along with other workers have been on strike protesting these unsafe and anti-union activities and demanding that they receive fair benefits and working conditions. While Metro Lighting has claimed that they have been closed due to a “family emergency”, the business has been open, taking appointments and doing business using non-union labor.

The City of Berkeley in the past has supported the right of workers to organize and bargain for better wages and conditions. Therefore, it is important that the City oppose the reprehensible actions of Metro Lighting and support the employees in their strike for better wages and working conditions.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

NONE

CONTACT PERSON:

Councilmember Kriss Worthington, 981-7170.

