

# Protest On Demand

## At \$10 an Hour



ADOLPHE PIERRE-LOUIS/JOURNAL

Hired protesters, from left, Marcelo Vargas, his cousin Rosa Maldonado, aunt Yolanda Maldonado and mother Geraldine Vargas, hold a banner in front of the First Baptist Church on Broadway and Central NE on Wednesday.

## Union Pays Workers To Picket Church, Businesses

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 By RIVKELA BRODSKY  
 Journal Staff Writer

Marcelo Vargas held the left end of a sign reading "Shame on First Baptist Church" by the building this week while handing out yellow fliers depicting a rat in a house eating the American flag. The papers called out the church for "contributing to the erosion of area standards for carpenter craft-workers."

Vargas is one of a small group of people hired by a local carpenters union to protest labor standards. There is no clear connection between the businesses targeted and the campaign, and the union has not provided details.

Vargas could only say that the dispute concerning First Baptist Church had some connection to a church recently built on the West Side.

In the past few weeks, banners have been spotted at the church, Sunflower Market on Lomas and San Mateo NE, behind the UNM School of Law, in front of a Schott Solar office and another in front of a restaurant undergoing renovations at Jefferson and Pan American Freeway West NE.

"There are sites like this all over Albuquerque," Vargas said, adding that his cousin has held up a sign for the union on UNM's North Campus.

The signs all read "Shame On" with the name of the business following it. Each reads "labor dispute" in black lettering on two top areas of the white banner. The protests are small. A few people are hired to hold up the sign and hand out fliers.

Vargas said he is getting paid \$10 an hour.

The fliers say Carpenters Local 1319 is behind the campaign and lists a name and number for each business or entity being called out, urging people to call to "see that area labor standards are met."

Michael M. Cook, senior pastor at First Baptist Church, who was listed on a flier, did not return a phone message.

Calls for comment to Carpenters Local 1319 were referred to the Southwest Regional Council of Carpenters in Los Angeles.

Justin Weidner, chief of staff for the organization, which represents 65,000 members in five Southwest states including Nevada, Arizona, Utah, Cal-

ifornia and New Mexico, said union members are not used in campaigns.

"The reality is that our members are out there working as carpenters, so it's difficult to have them do stuff like that," he told the *Journal* on Wednesday.

The organization, affiliated with the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, including local chapter 1319 in Albuquerque and Farmington, just broke ground on a \$20 million training facility in Albuquerque at Comanche and I-25.

Weidner couldn't say in detail what the issues were concerning First Baptist Church, Sunflower Market, UNM School of Law or others, but said the campaign has to do with "area standard wages."

When asked how businesses were picked as part of campaign efforts, Weidner said "I don't have a comment on that."

He referred all questions about the details of the campaign to Hal Jensen, an administrative assistant for the council, who was in Albuquerque this week. Jensen did not return several *Journal* messages.