



JOURNAL FILE

Union volunteers and people hired by a Los Angeles-based carpenters union heckle and shout at Lone Sun Builders workers going in and out of the Hotel St. Francis in Santa Fe during a remodel in 2009. Lone Sun President Chet Karnas testified before a congressional subcommittee Thursday how such actions have damaged his business.

Banner Battle

Congress Told of Damage Done by Union Campaign

Copyright © 2011 Albuquerque Journal

By RIVKELA BRODSKY
Journal Staff Writer

A local contractor told a congressional hearing in Washington, D.C., on Thursday that a "Shame On" bannering campaign by an Los Angeles carpenters union over the past few years has cost him \$100,000 in business, tens of thousands of dollars in legal fees and forced layoffs.

Chet Karnas, president and owner of Lone Sun Builders Inc. told the U.S. House Education and the Workforce Committee's Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor and Pensions that the union campaign has hurt his company's reputation, caused a 20 to 30 percent drop in sales and is partly to blame, along with the economy, for "a tremendous amount of layoffs."

That's despite an effort by Lone Sun Builders Inc. to fight back, including staging counter-protests against the union and publishing a blog.

"Despite our efforts, business has still suffered. Many clients were



COURTESY PHOTO

Chet Karnas, owner of Lone Sun Builders, testified before a U.S. House Education and the Workforce subcommittee on Thursday about the negative impact a carpenters union bannering campaign has had on his company.

impacted and many general contractors are reluctant to utilize our services fearing the organizer's aggressive presence," he told the committee, which streamed the hearing live online.

Karnas, one of four witnesses speaking Thursday, said the bannering against his company by the Los Angeles-based Southwest Regional Council

of Carpenters began in 2008 at about a dozen work sites.

"The carpenters (union) displayed these large signs in front of our client's buildings emblazoned with inflammatory, unfounded claims about our labor policies," he said.

The campaign escalated in 2009 to mass pickets that included vulgar chants, false accusations, physical threats, trespassing and more, he said. In one incident, police were called during a union protest at St. Michael & All Angels Episcopal Church in the North Valley.

The Southwest Regional Council of Carpenters, which has organized numerous bannerings around Albuquerque and Santa Fe using Carpenters Local 1319 on its signs, has yet to provide details to the *Journal* about the protests and how sites are chosen despite years of requests for comment.

Typically, a few hired non-union workers hand out fliers and hold up a white banner reading "Shame On" with the name of a particular business following it and "labor dispute" in black lettering on two top areas of the banner.

ALBUQUERQUE JOURNAL



FINAL ★★★★★

HOME-OWNED AND HOME-OPERATED ■ MADE IN THE U.S.A.

31ST YEAR, No. 147 ■ 118 PAGES IN 11 SECTIONS

FRIDAY MORNING, MAY 27, 2011

Copyright © 2011, Journal Publishing Co. ■ Daily 50 cents