

# Local Union workers lose promised casino construction jobs to out-of-state labor

/EINPresswire.com/ ROHNERT PARK, CA (Submitpressrelease123.com - press release) Graton Rancheria's promises to Sonoma County [union](#) workers have been dashed by lay-offs of local union members as out-of-area workers are being brought in to take their places. Sonoma County union construction workers report that workers are being brought in from "Nevada and the L.A. area" and even as far away as Alabama to work on the Graton Rancheria [casino](#)/hotel project in Rohnert Park.

Reports started as early as November, as a local member of the Carpenters Union raised the first alarm about locals being replaced by out-of-area workers. Now the complaints are coming from a union cement worker who believes that approximately 70% of the casino workforce is made up of the out-of-towners.

This is a stark contrast to the figure union officials and Station Casinos reported just a month ago, when local union officials reported that the contractors had only bought in "two guys from Vegas" and that "85% to 95%" of the workers were local.

Local union members say that contractors building the casino are manipulating or "churning" numbers by hiring from the local Labor Hall to artificially inflate the figures for local union workers, then laying those workers off a few weeks later. Local union members find themselves in a revolving door.

North Bay Labor Council Director Lisa Maldonado recently called these charges "bald-faced lies" in her January 7 posting on the Stop the Casino 101 Coalition's (STC101) Facebook page.

Ms. Maldonado stated that "70% " of the construction jobs are local, if you include "Lake Mendocino Napa as local". Ms. Maldonado says that the agreement the union has with Graton Rancheria is "strictly monitored for compliance and (they) have been thrilled with the casino putting local workers and tribe members to work in good middle class jobs."

But one man who worked at the site disagrees. Our source, who is available for interviews on the condition of anonymity, was clear on how one casino contractor is manipulating the system.

"They have been churning the labor since day one," said a Sonoma County resident and life-long

union man who worked on the casino. "They laid them off within a few days at first, then they realized that if the local hire didn't work 40 hours, they got their number back on the "Out of Work" list so the next time the sub (contractor) called they would get the same guy."

"After that they changed their tactics and started keeping them on until they had more than 40 hours, then laid them off to make sure they would go to the bottom of the Out of Work list so the next time they called they wouldn't get the same guy," he said. "They are churning the crew to make sure to keep everybody under a threat of being fired and to make sure nobody stays long enough to keep track of who is local and who is outside hire."

The contractor apparently claimed that "you Sonoma County guys are too slow" as an excuse for laying off the local workers.

"I was on the parking garage," said the man, who prefers to remain anonymous so that his chances for future work will not be affected. "They cleared me and two other guys out. They laid off the one guy after two days and then I found out the other guy is really from Alabama and rented a local house to make it look like he was a local hire. They did that every week I was there. Hire a bunch of locals, bring in some of their Las Vegas and LA guys then lay off the local guys within a week or so."

Our source also states that a steward has never been on the site, a violation of union protocol which requires a shop steward on-site.

"Promises were made to our local union members", said Pastor Chip Worthington, founder of Stop the Casino 101 Coalition (STC101). "These men expected lengthy employment, not a week or two of work."

"There's one way that this can be proved or disproved, and that is for the contractors to allow their payroll figures to be audited weekly as they would for a publicly-funded project", he said. "We challenge Graton Rancheria Chairman Greg Sarris, who made so many promises about hiring local union workers, to protect local union workers and demand an audit."

Sarris recently received the Working Class Hero Award from the North Bay Labor Council, for his "resolute advocacy and activism" in building their casino using union workers under a Project Labor Agreement.

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