

Labor unions don't deserve a stranglehold on new KCI terminal jobs

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A drawn-out dispute over the terms of the PLA — the project labor agreement — covering the construction of a new terminal at the Kansas City International Airport is now threatening to delay the planned demolition of the airport's current Terminal A this fall and the subsequent construction work scheduled to begin in 2019.

On one side of the impasse are Missouri construction union bosses. They are demanding that every single frontline job on the KCI project be unionized, and that all workers be forced to pay union dues or fees in order to participate.

This big labor demand is overt and unabashed. "[There's no reason this shouldn't be a 100 percent union job](#)," a spokesman for the St. Louis-Kansas City Carpenters' Regional Council told a Star reporter in January. "No reason whatsoever."

On the other side of the impasse are Edgemoor Infrastructure & Real Estate, the developer selected by Kansas City elected officials to lead the billion-dollar project, and many African-American construction employers and employees in the region.

Bowing to the power of big labor in Kansas City politics, Edgemoor quickly agreed to a PLA that sets aside most of the KCI terminal building jobs for unionized workers. (While Missouri law prohibits such discriminatory PLAs on public works projects, this law does not cover KCI construction, which is primarily funded by federal "user fees.")

But Edgemoor continues to insist that, in order to prevent minority- and women-owned businesses and their employees from being denied the opportunity for meaningful participation, the pro-big labor PLA cannot cover *all* the bids for KCI terminal construction.

For this reason alone, a number of construction union bosses actually walked away from negotiations with Edgemoor in March. At this writing, it remains to be seen if big labor kingpins will ever agree to anything short of 100 percent control over the jobs on the project.

Several black community leaders in Missouri are furious about what is happening. Recently, The Call, Kansas City's century-old African-American newspaper, [quoted one of them](#):

"We helped get the (new airport terminal project) passed by ...75 percent. Now that it is time to reap financial benefits with jobs, the unions want to kick minorities out of the

plan. ... The city leaders expressed that they wanted ... a carve-out for minorities that don't want to have to join the unions to work, but the unions don't care."

If federal labor policy were not radically biased in favor of monopolistic unionism, then perhaps all construction employers and employees who wanted to bid on contracts for the KCI upgrade — regardless of union affiliation or the race or gender of the company's owner or employees — would be able to compete on a level playing field.

That's undoubtedly what the overwhelming majority of Missourians would prefer.

The big labor selfishness and greed now on display in Missouri is a perfect illustration of why the state's lawmakers made the correct decision when they passed a right-to-work law early last year prohibiting forced union dues and fees. Unfortunately, union officials have been able to use a quirk in the state's legal code to block implementation of this statute, and put on the ballot this year a measure to wipe Missouri's right-to-work law off the books.

It will be a shame if the big labor propaganda blitz now underway in the Show-Me State succeeds in enabling construction and other union bosses, who clearly care about no one but themselves, to continue forcing workers to pay their salaries as a job condition.

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