Three Boeing Employees Agree To Testify Against NLRB

Meg Kinnard, Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — Three employees at Boeing Co.'s plant in North Charleston, S.C. want roles in a lawsuit filed by the National Labor Relations Board, claiming they are sure to lose their jobs if the federal agency is successful and work on the 787 passenger jet returns to Washington state.

"If seems clear that many Charleston-based employees and I would lose our jobs with Boeing in South Carolina if the General Counsel's proposed remedy is adopted," Dennis Murray wrote in a declaration filed Wednesday. "The current unemployment rate here is high and jobs are scarce. If I lose my job, my family will be devastated. ... Thanks to Boeing I am able to keep food on the table and a roof over my head for all of my family."

Murray, Meredith Going Sr. and Cynthia Ramaker want a voice opposing the NLRB's complaint, filed in April, claiming Boeing located a new 787 passenger aircraft assembly line in South Carolina — a right-to-work state — to retaliate against Washington state union workers who went on strike in 2008. The NLRB wants that work returned to Washington, even though the company has already built a new South Carolina plant and hired 1,000 workers.

Last month, Boeing said that stopping 787 work in South Carolina would be impermissibly punitive because it would effectively shut it down and would be a radical departure from legal precedent.

Boeing has also taken issue with the labor board's claim that the company removed or transferred any work from its Washington state facility in Puget Sound, where the aircraft is assembled by members of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers. The Chicago-based company says all the work in South Carolina will be new work and that no union member has lost a job over the action.

A hearing in the case is scheduled for June 14.

Murray — laid off by aerospace manufacturer Lockheed Martin before going to work for Vought, amanufacturer whose facility was eventually bought by Boeing — led an effort to decertify the Machinists at the North Charleston plant, after which he said Boeing was generous to employees and gave a 3 percent across-the-board raise.

"Overall, the wages, wage structure and benefits are better under the current non-union Boeing than under the prior unionized Vought," he said. "Most employees in my building are happy."

Ramaker, who was the union's local president at the time of the Vought-Boeing

sale, said she was frustrated by the Machinists' negative comments about the South Carolina operation.

"They are violating my right to work with a choice," Ramaker wrote. "Isn't that was being an American is all about? That is MY right!"

Having helped organized a Machinists local when he worked at Lockheed Martin, Going said he fears having to draw unemployment but would not want to work in a unionized environment again.

"When I helped organize the union at Lockheed earlier in my career, I was young and naïve about unions, but I am neither young nor naïve any longer," Going said.

Murray, Ramaker and Going are represented by the National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation. NLRB spokeswoman Nancy Cleeland said the agency had just received the filing and was reviewing it.

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