

Casino Labor Dispute Spreads From Las Vegas To D.C.

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Chanting and carrying signs saying “No contract. No peace,” more than 1,000 casino workers protested outside the Palms Casino in Las Vegas on Wednesday in a labor dispute which has drawn the attention of Congress and involves President Trump’s comprehensive tax cut bill of 2017.

This week’s demonstration in Las Vegas followed a June 20 picketing of the Washington, D.C. office of a lobbyist for Station Casinos, which owns the Palms.

The protests were organized by the Culinary Union in Las Vegas and its parent union, Unite Here, to pressure Station and its parent company, Red Rock Resorts, to negotiate a labor contract with the Palms’ employees.

In April 2018, workers at the Palms voted 84 percent to 16 percent to unionize.

Station has refused to accept the results of that election and another election five months earlier at the Green Valley Ranch Hotel where employees voted to unionize with 78 percent of the vote.

The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) ruled that Station has been “failing to bargain collectively and in good faith.”

Red Rock plans to challenge the NLRB ruling in federal court.

“With respect to both Palms and Green Valley Ranch, although the union would clearly prefer that we not exercise our legal right to challenge the NLRB’s decisions regarding those properties in the United States federal court, we have every right to do so and our challenges are both legal and appropriate,” said Michael Britt, a Red Rock senior vice president.

Meanwhile, Station has hired Nadeam Elshami, the former chief of staff for Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi of California, to lobby Congress for revenue from Trump’s comprehensive tax cut bill two years ago.

It was Elshami’s office which was picketed last week by Unite Here.

Elshami did not respond to a request for comment.

Station argues the [Tax Cuts and Jobs Act](#), the most sweeping tax reform bill in 31 years, includes a glitch which devalues a tax break for upgrades to commercial properties.

If Congress corrects the flaw in the tax cut bill, Station could obtain more money to pay for a \$690m reconstruction of the Palms.

But politics have changed since Trump signed the tax cut bill on December 22, 2017.

Democrats regained control of the House in the November 2018 election and unions are a significant part of their base.

Fourteen Democratic members of the House, including Dina Titus of Las Vegas and New Jersey representatives Donald Norcross and Bill Pascrell, signed [a May 16 letter](#) addressed to Frank and Lorenzo Fertitta, the billionaire brothers who own Station.

“Each of us has spoken out loudly and frequently about significant problems with the [tax cut bill of 2017], and we believe that all the parties adversely affected by the bill deserve a chance to make their voices heard,” the Democrats said in the letter.

“We also believe that employees at your facilities deserve a chance to make their voices heard,” the letter said.

Even a Republican — Republican [Congressman Brian Fitzpatrick of Pennsylvania](#) — signed a May 17 letter telling Frank Fertitta, who is Red Rock’s CEO, “it pains me to know that your company would be getting this benefit while simultaneously and potentially illegally blocking its employees of their right to form and join a union.”

The unions argue Station and Red Rock should come to the bargaining table and negotiate a labor contract before

appealing to Congress for money to refurbish the Palms.

“There’s a tremendous amount of solidarity among the workers at Station Casinos who are standing up and fighting so they won’t be left behind as the company continues to make record profits,” said Bethany Khan, a spokeswoman for the Culinary Union in Las Vegas.

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