



# OPEN SHOP GAZETTE

Volume XI, 2007 Associated General Contractors of California,

An Editorial in the *Orange County Register* of June 4, 2007 was titled "Democrats Again Do Unions' Bidding". (The *Register* does get it right sometimes). The editorial goes on to describe how proposed legislation is watered down by amendments added by special-interest groups. The ideal example is Senate Bill 645 which was proposed by Senator Lou Correa, D-Anaheim, as the behest of the Orange County Sanitation District, to allow the district to bid out its jobs using the cost-saving process known as "Design-Build".

Instead of having to use separate designers and contractors, as state law now requires, the legislation would allow the agency to merge the process and thereby save time and money in constructing needed infrastructure improvements. It sounds good, until one realizes the exceedingly high price that must be paid to the state's unions in order to win approval for this minor reform."

The Democrats, who are doing the unions' bidding, have attached an amendment to the bill that essentially cuts non-union contractors out of the bidding process. That is discriminatory to all open – shop contractors and costly to taxpayers, in that it reduces the pool of potential applicants. This language is featherbedding for the 17 percent of construction workers in California who are unionized at the expense of everyone else.

The bill requires the district to work only with contractors who use certified apprenticeship programs that have produced graduates in the past five years. These programs have traditionally been provided only by the unions and the union dominated California Apprenticeship Committee gets to decide whether new programs are needed. They tend not to find need when a nonunion contractor proposes one.

The unions pitch this amendment as a safety issue but have not provided any data proving that there is any safety problem with hiring open shop contractors whose employees have been trained in states or federally certified programs or at community colleges or the military. This is a rank effort to keep out the competition, but to dress it up in the name of a legitimate concern.

Some people say that without this language in the bill, it will not get through a Democratic (union) dominated legislature. But are the savings of having the ability to do design build worth giving up competitive bidding?

The Assembly meets to discuss this bill on June 12 and we need to keep the pressure on them to not let this happen.