



PRESS RELEASE

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Fire Fighters Pursue Suit against Hualapai Valley Fire District

Suit rises out of unconstitutional terminations of six fire fighters

Washington, D.C., January 19th, 2007 – Six members of the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) have today filed a lawsuit against the Hualapai Valley Fire District in Kingman, Arizona, charging that the Fire District violated their constitutional rights. The suit in federal court arises from the terminations of James Schnabel, Kamrin Dooley, Mike Carlson, Randall Nyberg, Jeff Campbell, and Oscar Lopez, all of whom were employed in good standing with the Fire District immediately prior to being discharged.

“It’s hard to believe that this kind of intimidation can take place in this day and age,” said IAFF General President Harold Schaitberger. “I want to put the Hualapai Valley Fire District, its Fire Chief, and its Board of Directors on notice that this International, and its quarter-million members, will bring the full force of the IAFF to bear on this matter. We will protect our members’ First Amendment rights, no matter how long it takes to correct this injustice.”

Schnabel, Dooley, Carlson, Nyberg, Campbell, and Lopez are all members of the United Professional Firefighters of Kingman, an affiliate of the IAFF. The United Professional Firefighters of Kingman includes chapters for fire fighters employed by the Kingman Fire Department and the Hualapai Valley Fire District’s fire department. Beginning in September, 2006, the Fire District has engaged in a systematic campaign of coercion, interrogations and terminations of fire fighters who are members of the IAFF Local.

The purge of union members began with the firings of Chapter Vice President Schnabel and Kamrin Dooley, following their efforts to raise numerous issues of public concern with the Fire District’s Fire Chief Wayne Eder. Following the terminations of these leaders of the Local, Chief Eder and members of the Hualapai Valley Fire District Board of Directors began an investigation into fire fighters who were members of the Local. This investigation has, to date, resulted in the termination of union members Carlson, Nyberg, Campbell, and Lopez.

"Fire Chief Eder has shown no interest in working with the Local to improve the Fire District's ability to protect the citizens it serves," said Local President Robert Borker of Kingman. "Unlike many fire departments, Chief Eder and the Hualapai Valley Fire District Board have taken the position that you are either with us or against us. Unfortunately, this approach negatively affects the ability of the Fire District's fire fighters to do their jobs as effectively as possible," Borker continued.

"This is clearly a heavy-handed attempt to break the fire-fighters' association, and to prevent it from speaking out on matters of legitimate public concern, such as the ability of Hualapai Valley Fire District to adequately protect its citizens," Schaitberger continued. "The IAFF will remain involved in this matter until justice is done, and these and all other Hualapai Valley fire fighters are treated with the respect, dignity and legal protections they deserve."

The International Association of Fire Fighters represents more than 260,000 professional fire fighters and emergency medical personnel.

For more information please contact Local President Robert Borker or Attorney Eric Hallstrom.

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