

# Dumped On

## Republic Service's union-busting tactics didn't work

By Martin J. Bennett

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On April 18, workers at the Sonoma County landfill and transfer stations voted to affiliate with Teamsters Local 665 in an election certified by the National Labor Relations Board. The landfill is operated by Republic Services, America's second largest waste-management company with 190 landfills in 40 states. The union victory is important for the workers and the entire community.

When Sonoma County contracted out the landfills in 2013, Republic cut wages by \$3 an hour and workers lost their pension benefits. After workers initiated an organizing drive, Republic countered with a classic anti-union campaign directed by the nation's largest union-busting law firm, Littler Mendelson. Workers were required to attend 5:30am anti-union meetings even on their days off. Anti-union literature was distributed at the worksite and sent to workers' homes.

Republic is a highly profitable company that reported \$10 billion in revenue last year. Moreover, in Sonoma County the company raked in substantial revenue after the landfill was opened for extended hours to receive 1 million tons of debris from post-fire cleanup contractors.

Why the union busting then? The bottom line is corporate greed. In 2017, an Economic Policy Institute report demonstrated that union workers are better paid and more likely to receive comprehensive benefits including affordable healthcare, paid vacation and sick leave, and retirement benefits. Health and safety standards are also higher in union workplaces.

Republic's anti-union campaign violated not only federal labor law but an agreement with the county and the its "living wage law," both of which required Republic to remain neutral if employees chose to organize. The public should be concerned.

Perhaps most importantly, union workers are protected against arbitrary discipline and are much more likely to speak out if waste materials are not properly disposed of, toxic materials and dangerous chemicals are dumped or trucks and heavy equipment are not adequately maintained.

Consequently, this union win at the landfill is good for workers, good for the community and good for the environment.

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