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Group Tries to Block Ballot Measure That Would Reverse Barrio Logan Zoning Change

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An advocacy group went to court Nov. 14 to stop industry's effort to put a measure on the local ballot.

At issue is new zoning for Barrio Logan, a neighborhood that includes businesses such as General Dynamics Nassco and BAE Systems San Diego Ship Repair. The yards maintain, upgrade and repair San Diego-based U.S. Navy ships. Nassco also builds new ships.

The National City-based Environmental Health Coalition filed a lawsuit to stop the ballot measure advocated by the Protect Our Jobs Coalition. The ballot measure calls for shelving the new zoning plan for Barrio Logan.

The Protect Our Jobs Coalition called the lawsuit frivolous.

In September, the San Diego City Council passed a new zoning plan for Barrio Logan. Among other things, the new plan limits the way businesses may use certain properties near the shipyards. Groups such as the Environmental Health Coalition say the new zoning protects residents against pollution and provides justice for the people living near the shipyards. Shipyard advocates, for their part, say Interstate 5 is a large polluter in the neighborhood.

Representatives of large shipyards said the new plan will harm their industry, drive up costs for their Navy clients, and may be a first step to driving ship repair out of the neighborhood — or San Diego. A group opposed to the zoning plan started gathering signatures to overturn the new zoning at the ballot box.

The latest wrinkle is the lawsuit to stop that referendum. Among other things, the lawsuit seeks a restraining order to stop the city from validating signatures on the petition. The lawsuit alleges that signature gatherers told lies to obtain the signatures. The Protect Our Jobs Coalition said signature gatherers were armed with facts and had to pledge to act with integrity.

The Environmental Health Coalition says the referendum is the work of large, out of town corporations, and asserts that the new Barrio Logan zoning plan will provide jobs to the community.

The Environmental Health Coalition, joined by San Diego resident Georgette Gomez, are plaintiffs and petitioners in the lawsuit. The city of San Diego and two individuals, City Clerk Elizabeth Maland and Registrar of Voters Michael Vu, were named as defendants and respondents. The Port of San Diego Ship Repair Association was named as a defendant and a real party in interest.

— SDBJ Staff Report



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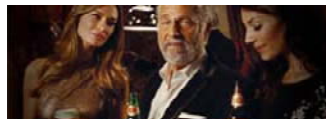
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