

My Turn

'Don't allow them to push you around'

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When I left Kit Carson Electric four years ago, I left in good standing. I did not leave for personal or political reasons, but for physical reasons that prevented me from doing my job. I know and understand how the co-op works.

After reading the ad released in *The Taos News* last week it was clear to me that the employees that claimed to have signed the statement supporting the co-op would not have done so on their own accord. Many of the employees signed solely to keep their jobs. I have received numerous anonymous calls from employees who fear retaliation from CEO Luis Reyes and his supporters. Not only were the employees coerced and intimidated into signing the statement, they were then forced to pay for the ad out of their own pockets.

This isn't a surprise. After another consultant hired by the co-op found that morale among existing employees was and still is at an all-time low. The report also found that almost none of the employees supported the management of the co-op. This report was kept a secret.

Morale is so low that employees chose to leave, seeking better working conditions at other electric utilities, costing them more in gas and time for a long commute.

Not only are these employees long-time residents of the community, they are also customers of the co-op. Many more employees would do so if they felt they could. Over 100 employees have left the co-op under Reyes' leadership.

The cost of replacing these employees, if they are simply going to leave for better conditions is outrageous for customers. But why would anyone want to work in a co-op that treats its employees the way that Kit Carson does?

Of course the argument is that employees will be laid off or not given a raise without an increase. Why, Mr. Reyes, is there money to support failing ventures that are constantly bleeding money, but not enough to give the real workers behind our co-op a living wage? How is it that you managed to postpone negotiations with the unionized workers of the co-op until after you secured a raise for yourself?

I know how Reyes works; I've been the victim. When it came time for board elections I would choose, as my American rights allow, to support the candidate that represented employees and members of the co-op the best.

If the candidate happened to challenge Reyes, I was punished for supporting the candidate. However, I put up with the punishment and continued to do my job to the best of my abilities, as

most employees do.

But it's time that the employees of Kit Carson speak up for themselves. Believe me when I say there is life after Kit Carson, despite what Reyes and some board members have told you.

Don't allow them to push you around. Being forced to sign something you don't agree with is illegal and against your constitutional rights, and if most of the board members won't protect your rights, maybe the Attorney General will.

To the board of directors who continue to refuse to listen to the employees and customers of Kit Carson, you're the ones that will lose. Reyes is simply using you, after not only securing himself a raise, but also a three-year contract.

He, as you know, is more than willing to throw you under the bus. Do your jobs and support your constituents, not the man bullying them.

The directors don't seem to understand that this recall will affect them, not Reyes. Reyes' half-hearted excuse is that the recall will cost the co-op money, which is not only a lie but insanely hypocritical.

This PR vendetta against his own customers has cost more money than he claims to need.

That's not responsible management, that's poor economics.

I am not a disgruntled ex-employee. I'm just disgusted at the way this man is running this co-op. He is nothing more than a liar to his customers and a dictator to his employees. Reyes is simply twisting the arms of his employees, who won't stand up for themselves, and who can blame them with the current economic conditions.

I'm writing this in hopes that not only will the PRC look deeply into what Reyes is trying to hide, but also that the employees of Kit Carson will stand up for themselves, and the board members under Reyes' thumb will stand up for their constituents.

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