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# TRIANGLE BUSINESS JOURNAL

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Triangle Business Journal - 10:40 AM EST Monday

## Union takes case against North Carolina to International Labor Organization

A labor union filed a complaint with the [International Labor Organization](#) in Geneva, Switzerland, on Monday accusing the state of North Carolina of violating international labor law.

The complaint, filed by the [United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America](#) (UE) and UE Local 150, the organization's North Carolina chapter, was also served to Gov. Mike Easley on Dec. 9, according to UE International Labor Affairs Director Robin Alexander.

The filing targets North Carolina General Statute 95-98, which makes it illegal for the state or any of its political subdivisions to enter contracts with labor unions. The law makes North Carolina one of only two states in the country that won't enter collective bargaining with labor unions.

"I believe this is the first time [UE] has done this," Alexander said, "and I know it is the first time a complaint of this nature has been with the ILO regarding the state of North Carolina."

A spokeswoman with Gov. Easley's office said she was unaware of the complaint but would look into the matter.

The complaint follows a public hearing in Raleigh on Nov. 3 during which state workers testified about the lack of collective bargaining rights. Organized by UE Local 150, the Raleigh hearing culminated a year of testimony from state employees at similar hearings around the state.


"International law is clear," Alexander said. "Workers have a right to organize and to bargain collectively to protect and improve their wages and working conditions. General Statute 95-98 flies in the face of that."

The delegation that delivered the complaint to Easley included labor representatives from North Carolina, Virginia, Iowa, Connecticut, Vermont, and Pennsylvania, as well as Canada, Mexico and Japan.

The ILO is an agency of the United Nations that oversees and enforces provisions of the international law governing workers' rights. Founded in 1919, it claims to be the only surviving major element of the Treaty of Versailles.

The United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America, based in Pittsburgh, Pa., is a 68-year-old union representing workers throughout the United States.

UE Local 150 represents more than 3,000 state workers, including employees at the Department of Health and Human Services, the University of North Carolina system and the state Department of Administration.

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