

# District Council 16

## International Union of Painters and Allied Trades

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Board of Directors  
Golden Gate Bridge Highway & Transportation District

Dear Board Member,

I am the Business Manager of District Council 16, International Union of Painters & Allied Trades. District Council 16 represents painters whom perform industrial painting on bridges, refineries and other structures throughout Northern California. Unlike the nonunion painters currently working on the Golden Gate Bridge, our members whom perform industrial painting have successfully participated in industry-standard training and have earned and possess industry-recognized certifications.

District Council 16 has been investigating the practices of the Golden Gate Bridge District and the Golden Gate Bridge Painters. Our investigation has caused us to question the District's overall performance as it relates to economically-efficient operations and where the employees' and the public's health and safety are concerned. Our investigation has also revealed that the Golden Gate Bridge Painters themselves are not adequately qualified to perform much of the work they are assigned and many lack even a minimally-acceptable work ethic.

The initial matters that we wish to report are as follows:

The Golden Gate Bridge Painters are among the highest-paid painters in the country. They are also among the least qualified to perform industrial painting in an environment where their own and the public's health and safety are at risk. The fact is, industrial painters working on both public and private projects whom come into contact with lead and other toxic and hazardous materials and/or work within confined spaces should be formally trained and demonstrate minimum proficiency to earn industry-standard certifications prior to being allowed to work within environments where their own and the public's health and safety are at risk. Golden Gate Bridge Painters and their managers are so inept dealing with lead and other contaminants on the Golden Gate Bridge that we have easily been able to document that they are exposing themselves, the public and contiguous lands and waters to lead and other contaminants. This is very troubling especially considering that responsible public agencies have, for many years, notified Golden Gate Bridge Management regarding existing lead



Auto, Marine &  
Specialty Painters

Carpet, Linoleum,  
Resilient Floor  
Covering &  
Soft Tile Layers

Drywall Finishers

Glaziers,  
Architectural Metal  
& Glass Workers

Painters

Paint, Varnish &  
Lacquer Makers

Sign, Pictorial &  
Display Painters

contamination which will cost the public millions to clean up yet Golden Gate Bridge Management continues to allow practices that increase the level of contamination and the costs associated with cleaning it up while simultaneously continuing to endanger the health and safety of their workers and the public. These issues have been reported and are known to Kary Witt and he has failed to adequately protect the workers and the public's health and safety. For management to merely send a memo reminding painters not to dump hazardous waste over the side of a bridge, instead of taking any real disciplinary action against the culprits, is extraordinarily-lax in this industry.

On September 16, 2011, Civil Engineer Noel Stampfli and Iron Worker Superintendent Phil Chaney caught two painters, Richard Looper and Amon Cage, sleeping on the job. It is our understanding that Richard Looper and Amon Cage received no disciplinary action as a result of this incident and none is pending. Previously, on July 12, 2011, Richard Looper was also involved in a physical altercation with another Golden Gate Bridge employee during working hours. It's our understanding that no disciplinary action was taken against Richard Looper as a result of this incident.

This is just a small sampling of what our investigation has uncovered. We have many more concerns, including additional economically-wasteful practices and unconscionable behavior by Golden Gate Bridge Painters in the workplace which we feel any person in a position of public trust would demand to be addressed and corrected. Economically-wasteful practices over the last ten years have gravely impacted the public's financial, health and safety interests and most notably resulted in a 100% increase in bridge tolls.

Why do Kary Witt and the Golden Gate Bridge District pay significantly more than the industry standard for industrial painters whom are not adequately qualified to perform much of the work they are assigned while putting up with their unconscionable behavior and unacceptable work ethic? Why did these painters whom are already among the highest-paid painters in the country get a raise last year when the other highly-qualified craft workers whom work on the Bridge did not? Why do Kary Witt and the District continue to allow practices wherein Golden Gate Bridge Painters continue to increase the level of lead contamination and the costs associated with cleaning it up while simultaneously endangering their own health and safety as well as the public's?

I am formally requesting a meeting with the Board or their representative to address these and other concerns. My objective is to ensure that the Board understands the serious nature of the situation and that immediate corrective action is taken. I further request a formal response to my request from the Board or your representative within two weeks of the date of this letter.

Sincerely,  


Doug Christopher  
Business Manager/Secretary-Treasurer  
District Council 16