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## Letter to the Editor

February 24, 2009

Editor  
Boston Herald  
One Herald Square  
Boston, MA 02118

Frank Callahan cannot seriously believe union-only projects provide “quality construction completed on time and on budget.” (Union Label Lauded, Feb. 23.)

Has he heard of the Big Dig? Built with only union labor, it was billions over budget and years behind schedule. As for the workmanship, State Auditor Joe DeNucci, a Democrat no less, said: “Not only have taxpayers paid for shoddy work, they are now paying for the repairs.” (State auditors' report on the Big Dig, July, 2007).

In 2005, the City of Fall River illegally adopted a PLA under pressure from unions to bar non-union workers from working on the taxpayer-funded project, even though non-union construction workers make up 80 percent of the state’s construction workforce, according to federal statistics. My organization responded to this illegal and discriminatory action by filing a lawsuit, which Mr. Callahan references in his letter.

After we filed our law suit, the city scrapped the PLA and reopened bidding to all qualified contractors. As a result, the number of bids nearly doubled and the prices plummeted. City taxpayers saved millions because of our efforts, leading the pro-union mayor to concede: "With more bidders, you tend to get a better price."

Mr. Callahan’s assertion that the state’s prevailing wage law doesn’t guarantee proper wages and benefits are paid is true, and he ought to know. My organization has recently conducted audits of wages paid on various public construction projects and have uncovered numerous violations by Callahan’s union contractors, which we have reported to the appropriate state authorities. Interestingly enough, Callahan’s own organization, the Massachusetts Building Trades Council has a lien against it for not paying employee payroll taxes. Those who live in glass houses shouldn’t throw stones.

The Massachusetts Building Trades Council and other unions are pressuring the Patrick Administration for union-only projects in return for their political support. It’s unfair to open shop contractors and it’s certainly unfair to the taxpayers who are still paying for the shoddy work on the union-only Big Dig.