



## **Gov. Deval Patrick stacks state board**

### **Critics: Sheet-metal panel members all pro-union**

**By Christine McConville**  
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Gov. Deval Patrick is at it again - stacking a state board with one-sided appointments in violation of the law, critics say.

Non-union sheet-metal installers are so mad that all of Patrick's appointees to an industry licensing board are pro-union that they plan to take the matter to court. They also say that new rules proposed by the pro-union board will drive the cost of sheet-metal work through the roof.

The state established its sheet-metal licensing board last year after two Boston firefighters died in a blaze at a Chinese restaurant in West Roxbury. Improperly installed sheet metal came crashing down during the fire.

At the time, there was no state licensing system for sheet-metal workers, who install duct work for kitchen and heating systems.

The new legislation calls for a seven-member board with representatives from the state's public safety and professional licensing offices plus five Patrick appointees: two wage-earning sheet-metal workers, two sheet-metal business owners with at least 10 years experience and a lay person to represent the public.

But under Patrick, the "wage-earning worker" slots are filled by two union officials: Michael J. LaFleur, business manager for Sheet Metal Workers Union Local 63, and James Wool, business manager of Sheet Metal Works Union Local 17.

The "sheet-metal business owner" slots are filled by Jeffrey S Chase, president of Cox Engineering Co., and Kevin R. Gill, president of McCusker-Gill Inc.

The "lay person" is Francis C. Boudrow, business manager for an insulators and asbestos workers union, a group that regularly works with union sheet-metal installers.

The administration has defended Patrick's picks despite the uproar from non-union workers.

"The new board is comprised of a strong mix of backgrounds, knowledge and insight," said George Weber, director of the state's professional licensing division.

But that's not good enough for Patrick's critics.

"Clearly a construction union leader is not a lay person," retired Massachusetts state judge Isaac Borenstein told the governor in a May letter.

Borenstein, who represents the non-union group Coalition for Fair Licensing, told Patrick his clients are "very concerned about the appointments."

He argued that LaFleur and Wool, as union officials, do not qualify as wage-earners, and he questioned if executives Chase and Gill have done the required 10 years of hands-on sheet-metal work.

Patrick administration legal spokesman Mark A. Reilly told Borenstein that the appointments are within the law.

In a letter the Herald obtained through a public records request, Reilly said Wool and LaFleur are technically wage-earners, Chase and Gill do have more than 10 years of practical experience in sheet-metal work, and Boudrow, with his affiliated-industry background, is an asset to the public.

But the non-union workers say they'll keep challenging the board's makeup, and its attempts to require all future jobs to have three journeymen installers for every apprentice. They say most jobs now require one apprentice for every more experienced journeyman and because journeymen generally earn \$61 per hour and apprentices earn \$24, the change could force consumers to pay much more for sheet-metal work.

"Consumer costs could increase by 30 percent," said coalition lawyer Jim Rudolph.