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Do I Smell A Rat? Not Anymore!

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Most of us have seen them. Those giant inflatable rats sitting outside a new-build construction site or a retail center remodel. Signs that a union is disparaging a contractor's use of non-union labor on a job site. This week, however, a federal appeals court ruled a city's [ban on certain signage was lawful](#) and could preclude unions from using those methods.

According to a report from Bloomberg Law:

"A federal appeals court on Feb. 14 ruled that the code enforcement officer in Grand Chute, Wis., did nothing unconstitutional or otherwise improper when he ordered a local union to deflate a Scabby balloon that members put up to protest an auto dealer's pay rates. The appeals court's ruling also lays out a path for other localities to ban the labor protest icon through use of sign ordinances without violating unions' First Amendment rights."

In sum, the union argued its First Amendment rights were being violated, but the court found the city's general signage ban – that applied to all such devices in most circumstances – was legitimate.

Inflatable rats have been a [hot issue on the labor front](#) for years. The union can appeal this case to the U.S. Supreme Court, so it may not automatically spell the end of the inflatables in cities that have similar ordinances on the books. Stay tuned.