

Printing Union Drops Teamsters Merger Suit Amid Arbitration

By **Emily Brill**

Law360 (May 22, 2023, 6:48 PM EDT) -- A union representing printing press employees decided to drop its federal lawsuit against its parent union, the Teamsters, as the dispute over the propriety of the parties' potential disaffiliation proceeds in arbitration.

The Graphic Communications Conference of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters — which recently changed its name to Printing Packaging & Production Union Workers, but remains GCC in court documents — filed the **notice of dismissal** Friday.

Counsel for the GCC referred Law360 to the union's general counsel, Peter Leff of Mooney Green Saindon Murphy & Welch PC, for comment. Leff told Law360 that "we're working [the dispute] out between the parties," and declined to comment further.

Representatives of the Teamsters did not immediately respond to requests for comment Monday.

The dispute — which concerns the Teamsters' stated plan to end an 18-year affiliation with GCC — is now playing out before arbitrator Mark L. Irvings, with the most recent hearings held May 18 and 19 in Washington, D.C., according to the Teamsters' latest court filing.

The GCC **sued the Teamsters** in November, saying their 2005 merger agreement banned unilateral changes, such as disaffiliations, unless a mutually agreed-upon plan for how the changes would proceed had been formulated. The agreement also compelled the arbitration of disputes, the GCC said.

Teamsters General Secretary-Treasurer Fred Zuckerman notified GCC President Kurt Freeman on June 30 that the Teamsters would be terminating the merger agreement effective Dec. 31, according to the suit.

In the wake of the termination notice, the GCC and Teamsters met on several occasions in an "attempt to resolve their differences," but the meetings were unsuccessful, the complaint said. The GCC submitted a request to arbitrate to the Teamsters on Oct. 28, but the Teamsters refused, the suit said.

The GCC's lawsuit sought an injunction — which was handed down in December — and accused the Teamsters of violating the merger agreement by forming a unilateral plan to end the unions' partnership.

"The termination notice provided no rationale or legal justification for the purported termination," the GCC said in its complaint. "The IBT agreed to arbitrate disputes under the merger agreement, but now refuses to honor that commitment."

The injunction, issued by U.S. District Judge Christopher Cooper, ordered the Teamsters not to dissolve the merger agreement until he'd made a decision on the arbitrability of the dispute.

In the wake of the injunction, the GCC and Teamsters decided to initiate arbitration, with the Teamsters proposing Irvings as an arbitrator Feb. 8. The GCC "eventually" agreed, according to the Teamsters, and the parties began working on resolving the dispute before Irvings.

A pending civil contempt motion — in which the **GCC accused the Teamsters** of violating the injunction by soliciting GCC locals to affiliate with the Teamsters — dies with the lawsuit. **The Teamsters denied** that it had solicited the locals and fought the contempt motion, saying the GCC was trying to expand the scope of the injunction.

The GCC is represented by Steven Benz, Mark Hirschboeck and Kyle M. Wood of Kellogg Hansen Todd Figel & Frederick PLLC.

The Teamsters are represented by Michael Feinberg and Gabriel Dumont Jr. of Feinberg Dumont & Brennan.

The case is Graphic Communications Conference of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters v. International Brotherhood of Teamsters, case number 1:22-cv-03484, in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.

--Additional reporting by Jessica Mach and Tim Ryan. Editing by Nick Petruncio.