

Kravis Center weighs options in dispute with stagehands union

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The Kravis Center has little ammunition left in its longstanding battle with the local stagehands union after an appeals court ruled against the center in the labor dispute.

The center can ask the full appeals court to reconsider the case, petition the U.S. Supreme Court to hear it, or "talk to the National Labor Relations Board and the union and see if we can reach an understanding that will bring us into compliance," said Robert Janowitz, the Kravis' attorney.

The center's leaders and its attorneys will discuss the matter and will probably reach a decision by the end of next week, he said.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit ruled Tuesday that the center acted illegally in its dealings with the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees and Moving Picture Technicians, Artists and Allied Crafts Local 500.

"We couldn't be happier at this point," said Alan Glassman, business agent for the union.

The Kravis and the union have been at loggerheads since September 2000, when the center declared an impasse in its negotiations with the union and stopped hiring stagehands through the union.

In March 2001, the union filed a complaint against the Kravis with the National Labor Relations Board. A federal administrative law judge issued a mixed ruling in 2002.

In October 2007, the NLRB ruled in favor of the union, and the Kravis appealed the case.

The dispute pertains only to Dreyfoos Hall; the center's other performance spaces aren't covered by the union contract.

The union wants the center to negotiate a contract, start using the union hiring hall, re-hire six department heads and pay damages for income its members lost when the center used non-union workers, said Matthew Mierzwa, the union's attorney.

The Kravis stands to lose millions of dollars because of the dispute, he said. Determining the exact amount the Kravis owes an estimated 150 workers will be difficult, since calculations factor in not only what the center would have paid them, but also income from replacement jobs, Mierzwa said.

"My guess is this will still be litigated 10 years from now," he said.