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## Union attempts to block barge carrying parts for windmill farm

By T.J. Pignataro  
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**L**ocal ironworkers took to the Buffalo River on Friday to protest a barge carrying windmill parts built by "non-union workers" from "out-of-town companies," union officials reported.

According to initial reports from the U.S. Coast Guard, six watercraft manned by protesters from Buffalo Ironworkers Local 6 were blocking passage of the tugboats Ohio and Washington, which were pushing windmill parts bound for installation south of Rochester.

Coast Guard and Erie County Sheriff's Office officials dispatched response boats to the area.

By the time authorities arrived, Coast Guard officials said late Friday, the blockade had ended and the cargo was passing freely.

Thomas Halligan, president of the Ironworkers local, said Friday's activities on the water extended the union's daily picket outside the former Republic Steel site to draw attention to out-of-state companies using non-union work for projects in New York State.

"It's everybody but New York," Halligan said. "These companies are coming out of Texas and North Dakota. They're stealing our local jobs."

Halligan said the parts built by out-of-state companies were being shipped from the old Republic Steel site to a windmill farm near Dansville.

Coast Guard officials said any blockade violated federal law because out-of-state workers were operating the tugs.

Friday's incident apparently involved no violence, and no arrests were made.

Hiring out-of-state, non-union workers is a hot-button issue for local union shops, often triggering protests.

A few years ago, several of the area's building trade unions, including the Ironworkers, protested the Buffalo Sewer Authority's hiring an out-of-state, non-union contractor for work at the Bird Island Wastewater Treatment Plant.

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