



Pennsylvania Union Leader Criticized for Threatening Legal Action Over Boy Scout's Volunteerism

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A Pennsylvania union leader has come under fire after threatening legal action against the city of Allentown for allowing a Boy Scout to voluntarily clear a walking path in a local park.

Nick Balzano, president of the Service Employees International Union's Allentown chapter, said last week that the union might file a grievance against the city for allowing 17-year-old Kevin Anderson to clear the hiking trail, instead of paying some of the 39 recently laid-off SEIU members to do the work.

Balzano's office did not return messages left by FoxNews.com, but the [Morning Call](#) quoted him as telling the city council that the union would be "looking into the Cub Scout or Boy Scout who did the trails ... There's to be no volunteers."

SEIU spokesman Matt Nerzig called Balzano's comments "completely unauthorized and insensitive" and said the union was "not at all" considering a grievance in this case.

"Not sure if it was out of context or just a bad moment, but we've got no intention of doing anything like that," Nerzig told FoxNews.com. "Not sure where he got the idea but he certainly doesn't have the authority to do so."

Anderson, a member of Boy Scouts Troop 301 of Center Valley, spent more than 200 hours creating the 1000-foot path in Kimmets Lock Park along with fellow scouts, friends and parents.

The junior at Southern Lehigh High School said he took on the project in an effort to earn an Eagle Scout badge and allow others to walk along the river while avoiding the busy road nearby.

In the process, he said, he and his team also transformed what was once a run-down section of the park into something residents and visitors can enjoy.

"The volunteers and I removed trash, many old tires and recyclables from this former illegal dump-site," Anderson told FoxNews.com.

"My trail will become a part of the 165-mile Delaware and Lehigh (D&L) Heritage corridor," he added. Allentown Mayor Ed Pawlowski said Anderson's work was a "great service to the community."

"We would hope that the well-intentioned efforts of an Eagle Scout candidate would not be challenged by the union," he told the Morning Call.

In a [letter](#) written Tuesday to Balzano, U.S. Rep. Charlie Dent of Pennsylvania said the union official owes the teen an apology.

"I am astounded, that you would threaten to file a grievance against the City of Allentown because the administration wisely chooses to make volunteer opportunities available," Dent said. "Especially when this type of frivolous grievance could add to the tax burden of the citizens."

"An apology both to the scout involved and to the public would be appropriate," he added.

The SEIU has been the only Allentown union to suffer layoffs amid the ongoing economic crisis.

Anderson's troop leader Tony Martocci declined to comment for this story.