AN ACT CONCERNING CAPTIVE AUDIENCE MEETINGS.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. (NEW) (Effective October 1, 2011) (a) As used in this section:

1. (1) "Employer" means a person engaged in business who has employees, including the state and any political subdivision of the state;

2. (2) "Employee" means any person engaged in service to an employer in a business of such employer;

3. (3) "Labor organization" means any organization that exists for the purpose, in whole or in part, of collective bargaining or of dealing with employers concerning grievances, terms or conditions of employment, or of other mutual aid or protection in connection with employment;

4. (4) "Politics" means the activities or affairs engaged in by government or a political party;

5. (5) "Political" means relative to, involving or characteristic of politics
or politicians; and

(6) "Political matters" includes political party affiliation or the decision to join or not join any lawful political, social or community group or activity or any labor organization.

(b) Except as provided in subsection (f) of this section, no employer, and no agent, representative or designee of such employer, shall require its employees to attend an employer-sponsored meeting with the employer or its agent, representative or designee, the primary purpose of which is to communicate the employer's opinion concerning religious or political matters, except that an employer or its agent, representative or designee may communicate to its employees any information concerning religious or political matters that the employer is required by law to communicate, but only to the extent of such legal requirement.

(c) No employer, and no agent, representative or designee of such employer, shall discharge, discipline or otherwise penalize, or threaten to discharge, discipline or otherwise penalize, any employee because the employee, or a person acting on behalf of the employee, makes a good-faith report, orally or in writing, of a violation or a suspected violation of this section. The provisions of this subsection shall not apply when the employee knows that such report is false.

(d) Any employee who is discharged, disciplined or otherwise penalized in violation of the provisions of this section may bring a civil action, not later than ninety days after the date of the alleged violation, in the superior court for the judicial district where the violation is alleged to have occurred or where the employer has its principal office. The court may award a prevailing employee all appropriate relief, including rehiring or reinstatement of the employee to the employee's former position, back pay and reestablishment of any employee benefits to which the employee would otherwise have been eligible if such violation had not occurred. The court shall award a prevailing employee treble damages, together with reasonable attorney's fees and
costs.

(e) Nothing in this section shall be construed to limit an employee's right to bring a common law cause of action against an employer for wrongful termination or to diminish or impair the rights of a person under any collective bargaining agreement.

(f) Nothing in this section shall prohibit: (1) A religious organization from requiring its employees to attend a meeting sponsored by such religious organization or to participate in any communications with such religious organization or its agent, representative or designee, the primary purpose of which is to communicate such religious organization's religious beliefs, practices or tenets; (2) a political organization from requiring its employees to attend a meeting sponsored by such political organization or to participate in any communications with such political organization or its agent, representative or designee, the primary purpose of which is to communicate such political organization's political tenets or purposes; (3) an institution of higher education, or any agent, representative or designee of such institution, from meeting with or participating in any communications with its employees concerning political or religious matters that are part of the regular coursework or any symposia or academic program at such institution; or (4) casual conversations between employees or between an employee and an agent, representative or designee of an employer, provided participation in such conversations is not required and such conversations occur in the normal course of the employee's duties.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:

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<tr>
<th>Section 1</th>
<th>October 1, 2011</th>
<th>New section</th>
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**LAB** Joint Favorable

**JUD** Joint Favorable