

March 25, 2013

**Statement by Paul Filson, Director of Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Connecticut State Council in favor of SB5 --AN ACT CONCERNING CHANGES TO CAMPAIGN FINANCE LAWS AND OTHER ELECTION LAWS. – Before the GAE Committee**

Good afternoon, Co-Chairs, Senator Musto, Representative Jutila and distinguished members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee - I appreciate the opportunity to be here before you today. My name is Paul Filson and I am Director of SEIU's Connecticut State Council. The State Council represents over 65,000 active members in Connecticut. SEIU is Connecticut's largest union. The SEIU State Council whole-heartedly supports increasing transparency in the electoral process. **SB5** is designed to remedy some of the extreme flaws that have recently proliferated subsequent to the Supreme Court's Citizen's United ruling allowing unlimited "independent" expenditures.

SEIU is a union that engages in politics. Our members' lives are affected by political decisions every day. Electing officials who believe that workers should have opportunities to earn a decent living with decent benefits with decent working conditions is one of the most important things a worker's organization can do. Union political activity has helped passed some of our country's most important protections including Social Security, Medicare, child labor laws and a myriad of anti-discrimination laws.

Workers' rights are under constant assault by big business and the politicians business helps to elect. When the Supreme Court ruled that restrictions on independent expenditures were illegal it unleashed a flood of corporate and billionaire money. The Supreme Court also made it perfectly legal for unions to spend money on independent expenditures too. Union money is limited and fully reported. Union expenses on politics have always been transparent. In fact, unions take pride in letting the public know member money paid for this or that expense in a political campaign. Unions support open, public and transparent politics. We have nothing to hide.

Not so wealthy individuals and corporations. Recent elections have seen the proliferation of shadowy organizations with misleading names spending millions of dollars in electoral work with the public completely in the dark as to



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who has funded the organization and to who the organization is beholden to. Connecticut needs to blaze the trail and require these organizations (organized under various tax codes) to reveal who is giving them money. Though it would be much better to place limits on "independent" expenditures - revealing who is behind the massive amounts of money being spent will help the public decide how credible each and every tv, radio or print ad is.

SEIU has always reported its political activity and will have no problem reporting its activity under the new rules proposed by **SB5**. There are a few technical changes that we will propose to fix lack of clarity in the current language as it affects all membership organizations.

SEIU also **supports HB 6673**. This Bill will correct problems with the Connecticut's landmark clean contracting legislation. If enacted it could potentially save the state considerable amounts of money.

SEIU is strongly **opposed to SB 1146**. We believe that elimination of cross-endorsement opportunities is an assault on democracy. Voters should have the right to vote for candidates endorsed by parties and appearing on lines that reflect their values.