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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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April 4, 2012

Mr. David Rolf
President
SEIU Healthcare 775NW
33615 1st Way South, Suite A
Federal Way, WA 98003

Dear Mr. Rolf:

The House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is examining the use of union dues and fees to fund political causes contrary to the will of many union workers. On February 8, 2012, the Committee held a hearing entitled, “The Right to Choose: Protecting Union Workers from Forced Political Contributions,” that featured three union workers who testified that their rights are being violated by the use of their dues to support political activity. The full hearing video and testimony of all of the witnesses are available at <http://issues.oversight.house.gov/worker-rights>. I write to request additional information to further inform the Committee in its oversight of these issues.

At the hearing, Sally Coomer, the mother of a severely disabled adult, testified that pursuant to state law she is effectively forced to be a member of the SEIU and pay union dues in order to receive Medicaid funds to care for her daughter.¹ In turn, she is obliged to support political activities that are the “polar opposites of [her] political beliefs.”² To add to her frustration, Ms. Coomer testified that the SEIU recently increased her union dues, for a limited time, to support its “political accountability fund.”³ Ms. Coomer explained that she could refuse to pay union dues, but to do so would preclude her from the ability to care for her daughter—an impossible choice.

Ms. Coomer is not alone in her opposition to forced political contributions. The Committee also heard testimony from “proud” UAW member Terry Bowman who has “heard the stories of hundreds of union workers who are ... tired and fed up with the political activities

¹ *The Right to Choose: Protecting Union Workers from Forced Political Contributions: Hearing Before the H. Comm. on Oversight & Govt. Reform*, 112th Cong. (2012) (Testimony of Sally Coomer).

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

of their union.”⁴ In fact, a 2010 survey found that 69 percent of private and public union workers think that union leaders should stop spending union dues on politics, and 66 percent believe that it is unreasonable that such spending can occur without their consent.⁵

It is indisputable that union political speech is subject to First Amendment protections; however, the First Amendment also protects against compelled speech of union workers. Indeed, the U.S. Supreme Court has long recognized that constitutional and statutory protections exist to protect a limited number of union workers from forced political contributions.⁶ In a significant victory for these union workers, the Supreme Court held in *Communications Workers of America et al. v. Beck et al.*, that the National Labor Relations Act does not allow a union, over the objection of dues-paying nonmember workers, to spend fees on activities unrelated to collective bargaining and other representational activities.⁷ Similar rights exist for public union workers.⁸ Subsequent to the *Beck* decision, the National Labor Relations Board mandated that unions abide by limited notification procedures to inform a union worker of their *Beck* rights and to object to non-representational expenditures by the union.⁹ Nevertheless, worker rights advocates have expressed concern that significant government and union-imposed barriers remain for workers to exercise their rights.¹⁰ Federal notification requirements have been rolled back under the Obama Administration, and Ms. Coomer testified that she is not entitled to receive a refund of union dues spent on politics. Instead, she may divert the funds to a non-religious organization that the union must approve.¹¹

Moreover, *Beck* rights have a limited effect because unions are only required to grant workers these rights if the worker chooses to forgo full union membership when hired or decides to subsequently resign union membership. This limitation denies workers, like Ms. Coomer, who is forced to be in the union to care for a child, the rights afforded to their similarly situated colleagues who do not agree with the use of their hard-earned wages to support political causes, especially those causes with which they disagree.¹²

To assist the Committee in its examination of these issues, I request that you answer the following questions and provide relevant documents to substantiate your responses by April 18, 2012.

⁴ *The Right to Choose: Protecting Union Workers from Forced Political Contributions: Hearing Before the H. Comm. on Oversight & Govt. Reform*, 112th Cong. (2012) (Testimony of Terry Bowman).

⁵ Union Facts.com, Use of Dues for Politics *available at* <http://www.unionfacts.com/political-money/use-of-dues-for-politics>.

⁶ See, *International Association of Machinists v. Street*, 367 U.S. 740 (1961); *Abood v. Detroit Board of Education*, 431 U.S. 209 (1977); *Chicago Teachers Union, Local No. 1 v. Hudson*, 475 U.S. 292 (1986).

⁷ *Communications Workers of America et al. v. Beck et al.*, 487 U.S. 735 (1988).

⁸ See, *Abood v. Detroit Board of Education*, 431 U.S. 209 (1977).

⁹ *California Saw*, 320 NLRB 224, 233 (1995), *enfd* 133 F.3d 1012 (7th Cir. 1998).

¹⁰ Raymond J. LaJeunesse, Jr., Esq, Workers' Experiences in Attempting to Exercise Their Rights Under *Communications Workers v. Beck* and Related Cases, Engage Volume 3 Apr. 2002.

¹¹ *The Right to Choose: Protecting Union Workers from Forced Political Contributions: Hearing Before the H. Comm. on Oversight & Govt. Reform*, 112th Cong. (2012) (Testimony of Sally Coomer).

¹² *Id.*

1. How does the SEIU, and in particular SEIU Healthcare 775NW, notify workers of their *Beck* rights?
 - a. Does SEIU Healthcare 775NW provide notices in the workplace or on its website?
 - b. Does SEIU Healthcare 775NW require that objections be renewed each year?
 - c. If so, have workers complained about the annual renewal requirement? If so, how has the SEIU Healthcare 775NW responded to these complaints?
 - d. Is it possible that it would be less burdensome and reduce paperwork for the union worker, and the union, if objections were valid until revoked?
 - e. Have workers complained about the process to object to non-representational spending? If so, how has the SEIU responded to these concerns?
2. Does the SEIU, and in particular SEIU Healthcare 775NW, take steps to help ensure that union workers who exercise their *Beck* rights do not face ridicule and harassment from their non-objecting colleagues and union leadership? If so, what are those steps?
3. Does the SEIU, and in particular SEIU Healthcare 775NW, publicize the identity of *Beck* objectors?
4. Does the SEIU, and in particular SEIU Healthcare 775NW, notify all of its workers of how much money is spent on non-representational activities? If so, how?
 - a. Is this information available on the SEIU and SEIU Healthcare 775NW website?
 - b. Does the SEIU, and in particular SEIU Healthcare 775NW, publicize a link to its LM-2 form on the homepage of its website? If not, is the SEIU opposed to doing so?
5. How does the SEIU, and in particular SEIU Healthcare 775NW, determine what expenditures are non-representational, and therefore should be excluded from the agency fee?
 - a. What activities does the SEIU consider non-representational? Please provide a list of such activities.
6. Does the SEIU account for differences in non-representational spending in election years versus non-election years? For example, if a *Beck* objector objects to non-representational spending in an election year, is the refund based on election year non-representational spending or non-election year non-representational spending?
7. Is the SEIU, and in particular SEIU Healthcare 775NW, receiving federal or state Medicaid funds from union members or agency fee payers?

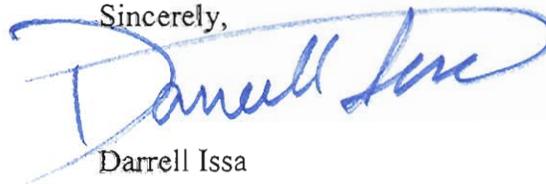
8. How much has the SEIU, and in particular SEIU Healthcare 775NW, collected in dues and fees from individual providers with disabled children, like Ms. Coomer, who have been effectively forced into the SEIU as a result of state law?
9. Does the SEIU, and in particular SEIU Healthcare 775NW, allow *all* union workers to object to non-representational activities, or are only agency fee payers permitted to object?
 - a. If only agency fee payers are permitted to object, would the SEIU support extending the right to object to all of its members?
10. Would the SEIU, and in particular SEIU Healthcare 775NW, support or oppose the right for all union workers to opt-in to funding the SEIU's political activities?
11. Have the SEIU, and in particular SEIU Healthcare 775NW, union leaders been notified by union workers about their opposition to political spending? If so, how has the SEIU responded to these concerns?

In preparing your answers to these questions, please answer each question individually and include the text of each question with your response. When producing documents to the Committee, please deliver production sets to the Majority Staff in room 2157 of the Rayburn House Office Building and the Minority Staff in Room 2471 of the Rayburn House Office Building. The Committee prefers, if possible, to receive all documents in electronic format.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and may at "any time" investigate "any matter" as set forth in House Rule X. An attachment to this letter provides additional information about responding to the Committee's request.

If you have any questions about this request, please contact the Committee at 202-225-5074. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Darrell Issa
Chairman

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings, Ranking Minority Member

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Responding to Committee Document Requests

1. In complying with this request, you should produce all responsive documents that are in your possession, custody, or control, whether held by you or your past or present agents, employees, and representatives acting on your behalf. You should also produce documents that you have a legal right to obtain, that you have a right to copy or to which you have access, as well as documents that you have placed in the temporary possession, custody, or control of any third party. Requested records, documents, data or information should not be destroyed, modified, removed, transferred or otherwise made inaccessible to the Committee.
2. In the event that any entity, organization or individual denoted in this request has been, or is also known by any other name than that herein denoted, the request shall be read also to include that alternative identification.
3. The Committee's preference is to receive documents in electronic form (i.e., CD, memory stick, or thumb drive) in lieu of paper productions.
4. Documents produced in electronic format should also be organized, identified, and indexed electronically.
5. Electronic document productions should be prepared according to the following standards:
 - (a) The production should consist of single page Tagged Image File ("TIF"), files accompanied by a Concordance-format load file, an Opticon reference file, and a file defining the fields and character lengths of the load file.
 - (b) Document numbers in the load file should match document Bates numbers and TIF file names.
 - (c) If the production is completed through a series of multiple partial productions, field names and file order in all load files should match.

6. Documents produced to the Committee should include an index describing the contents of the production. To the extent more than one CD, hard drive, memory stick, thumb drive, box or folder is produced, each CD, hard drive, memory stick, thumb drive, box or folder should contain an index describing its contents.
7. Documents produced in response to this request shall be produced together with copies of file labels, dividers or identifying markers with which they were associated when they were requested.
8. When you produce documents, you should identify the paragraph in the Committee's request to which the documents respond.
9. It shall not be a basis for refusal to produce documents that any other person or entity also possesses non-identical or identical copies of the same documents.
10. If any of the requested information is only reasonably available in machine-readable form (such as on a computer server, hard drive, or computer backup tape), you should consult with the Committee staff to determine the appropriate format in which to produce the information.
11. If compliance with the request cannot be made in full, compliance shall be made to the extent possible and shall include an explanation of why full compliance is not possible.
12. In the event that a document is withheld on the basis of privilege, provide a privilege log containing the following information concerning any such document: (a) the privilege asserted; (b) the type of document; (c) the general subject matter; (d) the date, author and addressee; and (e) the relationship of the author and addressee to each other.
13. If any document responsive to this request was, but no longer is, in your possession, custody, or control, identify the document (stating its date, author, subject and recipients) and explain the circumstances under which the document ceased to be in your possession, custody, or control.
14. If a date or other descriptive detail set forth in this request referring to a document is inaccurate, but the actual date or other descriptive detail is known to you or is otherwise apparent from the context of the request, you should produce all documents which would be responsive as if the date or other descriptive detail were correct.
15. The time period covered by this request is included in the attached request. To the extent a time period is not specified, produce relevant documents from January 1, 2009 to the present.
16. This request is continuing in nature and applies to any newly-discovered information. Any record, document, compilation of data or information, not produced because it has not been located or discovered by the return date, shall be produced immediately upon subsequent location or discovery.

17. All documents shall be Bates-stamped sequentially and produced sequentially.
18. Two sets of documents shall be delivered, one set to the Majority Staff and one set to the Minority Staff. When documents are produced to the Committee, production sets shall be delivered to the Majority Staff in Room 2157 of the Rayburn House Office Building and the Minority Staff in Room 2471 of the Rayburn House Office Building.
19. Upon completion of the document production, you should submit a written certification, signed by you or your counsel, stating that: (1) a diligent search has been completed of all documents in your possession, custody, or control which reasonably could contain responsive documents; and (2) all documents located during the search that are responsive have been produced to the Committee.

Definitions

1. The term "document" means any written, recorded, or graphic matter of any nature whatsoever, regardless of how recorded, and whether original or copy, including, but not limited to, the following: memoranda, reports, expense reports, books, manuals, instructions, financial reports, working papers, records, notes, letters, notices, confirmations, telegrams, receipts, appraisals, pamphlets, magazines, newspapers, prospectuses, inter-office and intra-office communications, electronic mail (e-mail), contracts, cables, notations of any type of conversation, telephone call, meeting or other communication, bulletins, printed matter, computer printouts, teletypes, invoices, transcripts, diaries, analyses, returns, summaries, minutes, bills, accounts, estimates, projections, comparisons, messages, correspondence, press releases, circulars, financial statements, reviews, opinions, offers, studies and investigations, questionnaires and surveys, and work sheets (and all drafts, preliminary versions, alterations, modifications, revisions, changes, and amendments of any of the foregoing, as well as any attachments or appendices thereto), and graphic or oral records or representations of any kind (including without limitation, photographs, charts, graphs, microfiche, microfilm, videotape, recordings and motion pictures), and electronic, mechanical, and electric records or representations of any kind (including, without limitation, tapes, cassettes, disks, and recordings) and other written, printed, typed, or other graphic or recorded matter of any kind or nature, however produced or reproduced, and whether preserved in writing, film, tape, disk, videotape or otherwise. A document bearing any notation not a part of the original text is to be considered a separate document. A draft or non-identical copy is a separate document within the meaning of this term.
2. The term "communication" means each manner or means of disclosure or exchange of information, regardless of means utilized, whether oral, electronic, by document or otherwise, and whether in a meeting, by telephone, facsimile, email, regular mail, telexes, releases, or otherwise.
3. The terms "and" and "or" shall be construed broadly and either conjunctively or disjunctively to bring within the scope of this request any information which might

otherwise be construed to be outside its scope. The singular includes plural number, and vice versa. The masculine includes the feminine and neuter genders.

4. The terms "person" or "persons" mean natural persons, firms, partnerships, associations, corporations, subsidiaries, divisions, departments, joint ventures, proprietorships, syndicates, or other legal, business or government entities, and all subsidiaries, affiliates, divisions, departments, branches, or other units thereof.
5. The term "identify," when used in a question about individuals, means to provide the following information: (a) the individual's complete name and title; and (b) the individual's business address and phone number.
6. The term "referring or relating," with respect to any given subject, means anything that constitutes, contains, embodies, reflects, identifies, states, refers to, deals with or is pertinent to that subject in any manner whatsoever.