



Press Release

For Release: Monday, May 18, 2009
Contact: Ron Cogliano
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LABOR GIVEN SPECIAL ACCESS ON PRO-UNION ORDINANCES *Springfield Official Emails Show Union 'Reviews' Drafts Before Council Votes*

Before the Springfield City Council recently voted on two proposed ordinances that give unions the upper hand in securing taxpayer-funded construction work, the draft language was sent to a union official for “review.” Emails from a city official reveal the behind-the-scenes involvement of organized labor in pushing the city council to enact ordinances designed to help unions regain lost market share on city construction projects.

“Organized labor is being given special access to lobby city officials far beyond what is allowed the average citizen. We have reason to believe unions are exerting undue influence and even exerting de facto veto power over proposed ordinances. The City Council appears to have abdicated its fiduciary responsibility to the citizens and its actions raise serious questions about whether the City of Springfield is indeed ready to come out from under state oversight,” said Ronald Cogliano, President of the Merit Construction Alliance, a trade organization representing the interests of open shop contractors and employees in Massachusetts.

The MCA has filed a public records request with the city for all correspondence between city officials and unions regarding the ordinances in order to learn the full extent of union involvement. The MCA already has two June 10 emails from Deputy City Solicitor Kathleen T. Breck in which she states the draft ordinances were sent for “review” to Mary Vogel, Executive Director of The Construction Institute, a union lobbying and marketing organization.

“I’ve sent redlined versions (sic) to Councilor Rooke and Mary Vogel to review,” Breck writes in one June 10 email to City Clerk Wayman Lee. In a second email to Lee, sent 25 minutes later, Breck refers to the second proposed ordinance: “I sent the redlined version to Councilor Rooke and Atty. Vogel to review.”

Five days later, after Vogel’s “review,” Councilor Timothy Rooke ushered the ordinances quickly through a preliminary vote by the City Council.

"If organized labor is calling the shots at City Hall, than the people of Springfield deserve to know their elected officials are more concerned about special interests than the peoples' interests. If a union lobbyist is writing the legislation for the City Council, then the people have a right to know, especially given the eerie similarities to the DiMasi-Cognos scandal on Beacon Hill where lobbyists were apparently allowed to run amok," Cogliano said.

Unions are heavily lobbying for the proposed ordinances in Springfield and other cities because they help steer public construction projects to union contractors by establishing unfair language that gives union contractors a competitive advantage over their non-union counterparts..

"These ordinances are nothing more than a cute attempt by unions, who realize they cannot adequately compete for work in a fair and competitive environment, to have their politically connected friends on the city council make it difficult, and in some cases impossible, for non-union contractors to bid and work on city projects. By blocking open shops, the city denies the vast majority of construction workers the option to bid and work on projects in Springfield, which will result in higher costs to the taxpayers" Cogliano said.

In Massachusetts, 80 percent of construction workers are non-union, according to the federal statistics reported at www.unionstats.com. And because open shop contractors employ the vast majority of the workers, they also employ more women and minorities than union contractors.

The text of the Breck emails are listed below:

-----Original Message-----

From: Breck, Kathy

Sent: Wednesday, June 10, 2009 11:29 AM

To: Lee, Wayman

Subject: DOCS-#63685-v2-REO_ordinance_with_City_changes.DOC

Wayman - Attached is the revised "Responsible Employer Ordinance" to be sponsored by Tim Rooke. I spoke to Councilor Rooke and told him I would need to make some changes to the original version before the Law Department could approve it "as to form". I've sent redlined verisons to Councilor Rooke and Mary Vogel to review.

I am working on the 2nd ordinance now and will get it to you shortly.

Kathy Breck 6/10/09

Kathleen T. Breck
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413-787-6179

-----Original Message-----

From: Breck, Kathy

Sent: Wednesday, June 10, 2009 11:54 AM

To: Lee, Wayman

Subject: DOCS-#63689-v2-springfield_residents_construction_ordinance_with_city_comments.DOC

Wayman - Attached for filing is the 2nd ordinance proposed by Councilor Rooke. This version includes some changes I made to allow it to be approved as to form. I sent the redlined version to Councilor Rooke and Atty. Vogel to review.

Please call with any questions. Thank you. Kathy Breck 6/10/09

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