



Mackinac Center Urges Discontinuation Of Home Help Dues

The Mackinac Center for Public Policy filed a complaint Thursday with the Michigan Employment Relations Commission requesting it order the discontinuation of deduction of union dues from the state's home help workers and refund dues paid for the past six months.

The issue involves the unionization through the Service Employees International Union of the home help workers, who receive funding from the state for aiding Medicaid-eligible persons who need assistance with basics around the house like making meals, getting dressed and other important tasks.

After the creation of the Michigan Quality Community Care Council through an interlocal agreement and a vote by the home help workers to unionize, the Mackinac Center blasted the move as nothing more than an effort by SEIU to tap into state money for union dues. In the past year, Governor Rick Snyder and the Legislature defunded the registry of the workers set up by the council and then passed a new law barring the workers from unionizing.

However, the day before that law, PA 76 of 2012 (SB 1018), was to take effect, the MQCCC and SEIU extended their contract, moving the end date from September 20 to February 28, 2013. Meanwhile, a federal judge issued a restraining order requiring dues to be collected through the end of the contract.

Patrick Wright of the Mackinac Center Legal Foundation said the organization is asking MERC to block the continued collection of the dues on the basis that it was the SEIU that provided \$12,000 to the MQCCC to keep operating in January, but then the two entities bargained together to extend the contract, a move Mr. Wright called a conflict of interest.

To justify refunding six months' worth of dues, Mr. Wright cites the law that passed barring public university graduate student research assistants from unionizing, PA 45 of 2012 (HB 4246). Mr. Wright said that law also includes a 20-factor test to judge whether a person is a public employee and under that test, home help workers do not qualify. That law took effect before the contract extension, he said.

But SEIU dismissed the complaint as frivolous and sour grapes from losing in federal court to stop the collection of dues.

"A federal court has refuted the Mackinac Center's claims, yet this shadowy think thank continues to waste taxpayer resources by filing another frivolous claim," said John Canzano, attorney for SEIU Healthcare Michigan, in a statement. "The Mackinac Center's latest publicity stunt clearly shows that it's more interested in provocative headlines than legitimate policy."