

Media Release

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SEIU Local 668 holds Capitol Budget Rally

Hundreds of union members lobby legislators to fund human services

The union representing over 21,000 state workers who provide services to the most at-risk citizens in Pennsylvania today held a rally and lobby day that brought hundreds of its members to the State Capitol to pressure legislators to pass a state budget that fully funds human services.

The SEIU Local 668 20th Annual Lobby Day rally was also addressed by a wide range of speakers, including the presidents of the AFL-CIO and United Way, and representatives from other community groups and non-profit human services providers that rely on the state budget to fund programs.

Kathy Jellison, President of SEIU Local 668, called on legislators to pass the budget in a timely fashion but to resist moves to cut funding for the services that her Union's members deliver.

"The members of SEIU Local 668 work hard every day to serve the most vulnerable populations in the state, including children, the elderly, and people with mental illnesses," said Jellison. "While a bad economy means our jobs become even harder, due to budget cuts, staffing shortages, and slumping tax revenues, it also means our jobs and the services we provide are even more vital."

Jellison also chided House Republican Daryl Metcalfe for participating in an anti-tax rally last week that featured a representation of a pig labeled "SEIU."

"Local 668 members provide the unemployment services, job services, food stamps and home heating help that our most vulnerable friends and neighbors need to survive," said Jellison. "But we have to deal with state legislators like Daryl Metcalfe, who think our members are 'pigs' and think the services we provide should be cut in order to allow big corporations to keep their lucrative tax loopholes."

Jellison said she had sent a letter demanding an apology to Metcalfe and had even given him time to address the members at the rally in order to apologize, which he declined.

"Daryl Metcalfe refused to come here and face you," Jellison said. "This is the same Daryl Metcalfe who wants corporate 'pigs' to continue paying much less than their fair share of taxes. He wants to cut programs that help the poor, while cutting taxes paid by the rich. So who is the REAL 'pig' here?"

Other speakers at the rally included leaders of the AFL-CIO and United Way, and representatives of other non-profit and community organizations that provide services which depend on state funding. Each speaker made a case for a more balanced approach to the state budget that makes corporations pay a fair share of the cost for funding state governmental services.

PA AFL-CIO President Richard Bloomingdale called on legislators to stand up for all of the citizens of Pennsylvania.

"Working families across our state expect their elected officials to adopt a common sense budget that protects public safety, provides services to the most vulnerable among us, and promotes Pennsylvania's economic recovery," said Bloomingdale. "Cutting essential services and public protections is not the answer to our budget crisis. Instead, we need to enact common sense revenue enhancements and a fair tax structure."

Sharon Ward, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Budget & Policy Center, called for closing corporate tax loopholes.

"The national recession has affected the Commonwealth's ability to meet the needs of individuals who have lost jobs and health care, and to support investments that will allow our economy to grow moving forward. We support a balanced approach to addressing this shortfall that raises revenue by closing tax loopholes and ending special interest tax breaks," said Ward.

Peg Dierkers, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence, pointed to the need for funding stability.

"Both the immediate and long term health of the middle class of Pennsylvania is dependent on having strong and stable human services. Without a balanced approach, this budget begins to rip apart the already fragile safety net of services that help the most vulnerable get back on their feet and struggling working men and women provide for their families," she said.

The rally capped a day-long lobbying effort by SEIU Local 668 members, who met earlier in the day and then fanned out through the building to meet with individual legislators in their offices to bring their concerns directly to the elected officials working to craft the state budget.

SEIU President Jellison noted that the budget rally and lobby day was part of an ongoing effort by her union to engage more members in the legislative process and to offer legislators first-hand knowledge of the impact of budget cuts from the people on the front lines of delivering the vital human services that the state budget funds.

"This event is not a one-shot deal," said Jellison. "Our union has been doing this at budget time every year for the last 20 years because we know that the citizens we serve need to have a voice in the budget process. If we don't step up, speak up and take action, there is no alternative. Our Local 668 members are concerned about the budget because they are good citizens first and they really care about the fellow Pennsylvania citizens they serve."

SEIU Local 668
Lobby Day Rally – June 15, 2010
List of Speakers

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The Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center is a nonpartisan, statewide policy research project that provides independent, credible analysis on state tax, budget, and related policy matters, with attention to the impact of current or proposed policies on working families. The PBPC works for budget and tax policies that provide sufficient revenue to fund education, health care, and services for vulnerable Pennsylvanians.

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United Way of Pennsylvania is the state association representing local United Ways that serve communities across the Commonwealth.

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PCADV is a statewide network of 61 community-based programs providing free and confidential services to nearly 100,000 domestic violence victims and their children each year in Pennsylvania.

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NASW-PA represents the 6,200 degreed social workers of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to advocate for professional social workers and advocate for sound social policy.

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PA AFL-CIO represents 900,000 working men and women in Pennsylvania who are members of 51 International Unions, with 1,422 Locals in all of Pennsylvania's 67 counties.

Hon. David Levdansky

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SEIU Local 668, the Pennsylvania Social Services Union, represents 21,000 members who work in state and county government and deliver human services to the most vulnerable populations in the state, including children, the elderly, and people with mental illnesses.