



RI Union Political Spending

A Web of Corruption

by Justin Katz



Justin Katz

Justin Katz is the research director for the Rhode Island Center for Freedom & Prosperity as well as the managing editor of the Center's news and commentary Web site, the *Ocean State Current*.

With his eclectic interests and penchant for autodidactic do-it-yourselfism, Katz caught an early wave of blogging in 2002 with his nationally recognized site, *Dust in the Light*, which became known for its blend of philosophizing and data-driven research with a conservative perspective. In 2004, he turned his focus to Rhode Island, founding the group blog, *Anchor Rising*. He joined the Center in 2012.

As research director, Katz has become a leading analyst of the state's economy, budgets, and the legislation introduced in the Rhode Island General Assembly. His work on various subjects for the Center has ranged from development of an economic model to predict the enrollment and financial results of various school choice policies to parody songs and videos for the *Ocean State Current*.

His writing has been featured in the *Providence Journal*, *National Review*, and many other publications, including *Proud to Be Right: Voices of the Next Conservative Generation*, edited by Jonah Goldberg (Harper Collins, 2010). In 2017, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Providence presented Katz with its Lumen Gentium award for communications.

In his effort to improve governance in the Ocean State, Katz has been active in the civic life of Tiverton, where he lives with his wife and children. As a founding member of the Tiverton Taxpayers Association (TTA), Katz helped to replace the town's annual financial town meeting with a private-ballot referendum. In the past seven years, he has developed and campaigned for lower-tax budgets both through individual elector petitions and as an elected member of the town's Budget Committee, winning four of those budget campaigns. In November 2018, the people of Tiverton elected him to the Town Council. As vice president of the council, he helped negotiate an innovative contract with the firefighters union that avoided arbitration, and he began public discussion of long-term planning for the town budget. Katz writes on local matters on *Tiverton Fact Check* and hosts a local podcast, *Tiverton on Track*. He is also the treasurer of TTA's charitable arm, Tiverton Cares, which provides personalized, small-scale assistance to local families in need.

The Center thanks **Monique Chartier**, without whose hours of research and attention to detail this report would not have been possible.



SUMMARY

While public employee unions claim to represent the average working man and woman, the political spending and advocacy of government unions is not average by any stretch of the imagination. A review of campaign finance reports clearly demonstrates that union dues, paid by everyday rank and file members, are used almost exclusively to fund left-wing ideologies and candidates from just one political party. This network of spending creates a web of corruption that prevents Rhode Island from maintaining a healthy and truly representative government.

In its 2018 ruling in *Janus v. AFSCME*, the United States Supreme Court found that government labor unions are inherently political and that employees have a Constitutional right not to fund political activities with which they may disagree.

This report reviews the political spending from funds deriving from the dues and donations paid by public employees in Rhode Island in 2018. Among the findings are that:

- 97% of government union campaign contributions went to Democrats.
- Over \$411,000 was spent by unions to influence elections.
- SEIU contributed about \$150,000 to Democrats, who that year gave the union a major legislative victory that opened the door for the unionization of home care workers.
- 96% of recipients of NEARI PACE donations were Democrats.
- 95% of recipients of AFT (RI) donations were Democrats.
- 99% of recipients of the RI Brotherhood of Correctional Officers donations were Democrats.

- 98% of recipient of the RI Association of Firefighters donations were Democrats.
- 96% of recipients of the RI AFL-CIO PAC donations were Democrats.
- Over a half-million dollars was spent by unions on lobbying and related legislative outreach.

A July 2019 *Wall Street Journal* editorial directly stated this union-government alliance ruined the Providence school system.¹ Under the headline, “An Education Horror Show,” the editorial board wrote:

Democrats as ever blame a lack of funding, though the district spent nearly \$18,000 per pupil in 2017 — about 50% more than the national average. In a system with any accountability, this would all be judged a disgrace and people would be fired. But this is a government failure, underwritten by entrenched union power.

Nationally, in addition to direct political contributions, the National Education Association of Rhode Island’s (NEARI’s) parent organization, the NEA, alone gave out grants **exceeding \$100 million** to far-left advocacy groups.

According to Rebecca Friedrichs, the California public school teacher whose U.S. Supreme Court case would have likely resulted in an earlier ruling identical to the *Janus v. AFSCME* case had it not been for the tragic death of Justice Antonin Scalia:²

For decades, the National Education Association (NEA) has deceitfully used teachers’ dues money — behind our backs and against our wills — to push political agendas most teachers abhor...

Indeed, the two major national teacher unions (NEA and the American Federation of Teachers [AFT]) have been making evident that politics and power are their primary goals, even rejecting motions that would have placed a quality education as the unions’ top priority. Instead of focusing on reading and math, the two unions are increasingly open that advancing a progressive-left agenda — social justice, abortion rights, universal health care, and climate change — is far more important.

¹ Editorial Board. “An Education Horror Show.” *Wall Street Journal*. July 7, 2019. www.wsj.com/articles/an-education-horror-show-11562532467 (Accessed 3/26/20.)

² The KAIROS Company for Rebecca Friedrich. *Rebecca Friedrichs: ‘NEA Assumes All Teachers Agree With Their Radical Agenda. WE DO NOT.’* For Kids & Country: The KAIROS Company for Rebecca Friedrich, July 9, 2019. forkidsandcountry.org/blog/statement-rebecca-friedrichs-nea-assumes-all-teachers-agree-with-their-radical-agenda-we-do-not (Accessed 3/26/20.)

The primacy of progressive politics was the implicit statement of the NEA at its annual meeting in 2019:³

The statement in support of abortion was included in a business item honoring survivors of abuse in the #MeToo movement. The NEA did not respond to repeated requests for comment, but according to the NEA website, the rationale given for the item was that “the most misogynistic forces, under Trump, want to abolish the gains of the women’s right movement [sic].”

While the Assembly adopted the abortion resolution, it defeated a business item declaring that the NEA “will re-dedicate itself to the pursuit of increased student learning” by making it the “lens through which we will assess every NEA program and initiative.”

The AFT’s statement came by way of its powerful president, Randi Weingarten, who in the words of Lance Izumi in the *Washington Times*, “decried the fixation on math and English.”⁴ Weingarten insisted, instead, that the country needs more concentration on “civics participation” and, specifically, “the fight for social justice.”

³ Matt Hadro. “USCCB official: NEA abortion support ‘appalling.’” Catholic News Agency. July 12, 2019. www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/usccb-official-nea-abortion-support-appalling-24348 (Accessed 3/26/20.)

⁴ Lance Izumi. “When national teacher unions careen left.” *The Washington Times*. July 29, 2019. www.washingtontimes.com/news/2019/jul/29/when-national-teacher-unions-careen-left (Accessed 3/26/20.)

BY THE NUMBERS

As part of its MyPayMySayRI.com campaign, the Center compiled and analyzed the 2018 campaign contributions to Rhode Island officials and candidates from political action committees (PACs) of the five RI public labor unions — including three of the largest public unions (NEARI, RI Federation of Teachers and Healthcare Professionals [RIFT], and Council 94, including its own PAC and that of its umbrella union, the AFL-CIO) plus the RI Brotherhood of Correctional Officers and RI State Association of Firefighters. We also compiled independent campaign expenditures by all labor unions in 2018. (See Appendix.)

Because large organizations like unions have many ways to funnel money into politics, and because they sometimes do so under names or acronyms that aren’t obvious, this should not be considered an exhaustive list, but merely a sampling. Here are some of our findings concerning these unions:

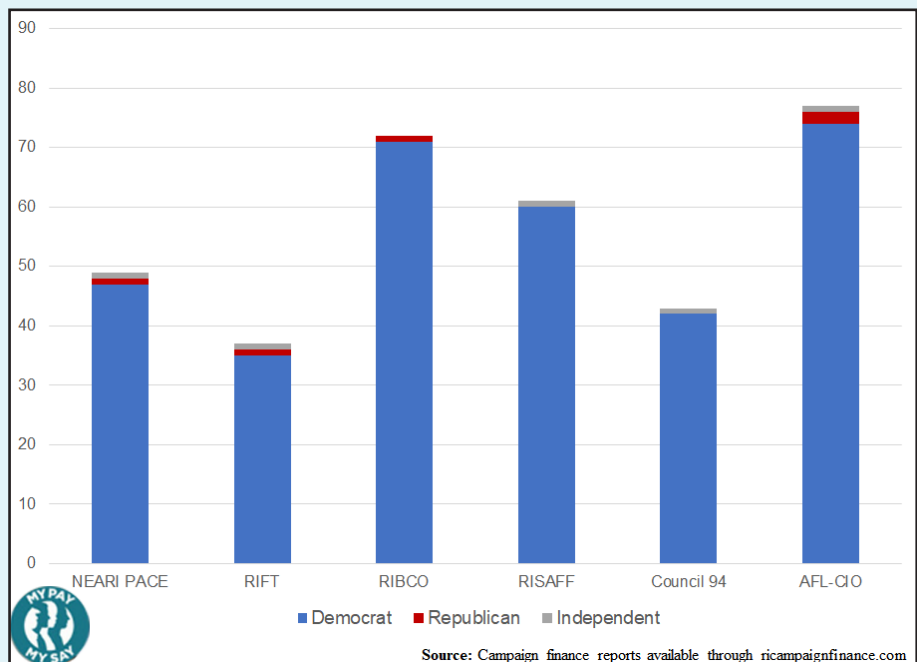
Of 339 direct campaign contributions to candidates or partisan organizations by these unions in 2018, 329 went to Democrats (97%), which breaks down as follows (see Figure 1):

- NEARI PACE: 47 of 49 recipients were Democrats, one was Republican, and one was unaffiliated.
- RIFT: 35 of 37 recipients were Democrats, one was Republican, and one was independent.
- RI Brotherhood of Correctional Officers: 71 of 72 recipients were Democrats and one was Republican.
- RI State Association of Firefighters: 60 of 61 recipients were Democrats and one was independent.

Figure 1

*RI Public-Sector Unions
Number of Political
Contributions by Recipient
Party, 2018*

Source: Campaign finance reports available through ricampaignfinance.com



- RI Council 94 (PEOPLE PAC): 42 of 43 recipients were Democrats and one was independent.
- RI AFL-CIO PAC: 74 of 77 recipients were Democrats, two were Republican, and one was independent.

Of the \$118,505 in direct campaign contributions, \$114,905 went to Democrats (97%) (see Figure 2).

Separate from and in addition to direct contributions, the independent campaign expenditures made by all labor unions (not just those listed above) in 2018 totaled \$232,463 and benefited Democrat incumbents and candidates only (100%). Additionally, labor unions spent \$67,542 in independent campaign expenditures to defeat Republican or conservative or anti-union candidates or incumbents.

Focusing on just the four state-officer races (governor, lieutenant governor, treasurer, and secretary of state), all four of the recipients of campaign contributions and independent campaign expenditures by unions (100%) were Democrats. In the case of the lieutenant governor Democrat primary, the recipient was the progressive candidate (Aaron Regunberg), not the moderate Democrat (Dan McKee).

Longer-running data shows that this wasn't a one-year fluke. From 2000 to 2017, unions revealed by a search for "Rhode Island" on PublicUnionFacts.com gave \$1,695,565 to candidates and parties in Rhode Island (see Figure 3).

Democrats received 98.4% of that largess, or \$1,664,270. When it comes to the \$263,087 direct payments to identifiable party organizations, every donation went to Democrats

with the exception of a single \$1,000 gift from the Rhode Island Trooper Association in 2014.

The same data shows these unions contributing \$476,945 to ballot measures, most of them for causes and campaigns outside of Rhode Island.

INSIDE THE MONEY-GO-ROUND

In its *Janus v. AFSCME* ruling the Supreme Court of the United States found that government labor unions are inherently political and that employees have a Constitutional right not to fund their activities. In Rhode Island, the case of Valarie Lawson presents a cartoonish illustration of this principle (see sidebar on page 5). A review of the political activities of Rhode Island's government labor unions shows that the Lawson story is not the only exclamation point that the Ocean State places on the Supreme Court's finding.

In fact, 100% of all candidate-related independent expenditures from unions and their PACs for the 2018 election went to Democrat candidates or to oppose Republicans. About half of their total spending supported progressive Democrat Governor Gina Raimondo alone (nearly \$200,000).

Approximately \$148,000 of that came from the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), which benefited from legislation that year concerning the unionization of independent home-care workers. In August 2018, the RI Center for Freedom & Prosperity noted the suspicious timing of

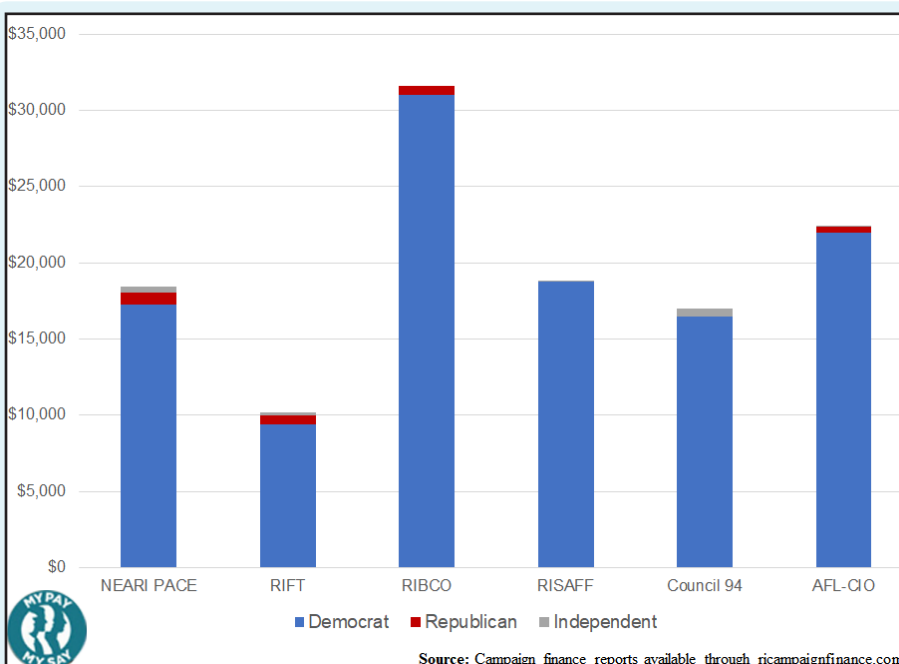


Figure 2

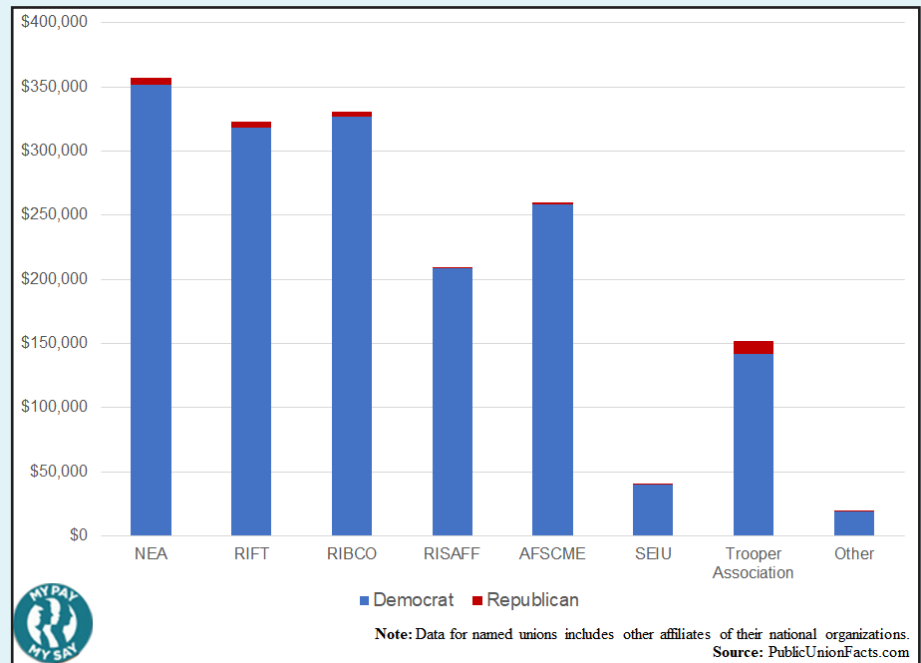
*RI Public-Sector Unions
Amount of Political
Contributions by Recipient
Party, 2018*

Source: Campaign finance reports available through ricampaignfinance.com

Figure 3

**RI Public-Sector Unions
Amount of Political
Contributions by Recipient
Party, 2000–2017**

Source: PublicUnionFacts.com



some SEIU mailings, which seemed to be coordinated with the state's delay of payments to those workers:⁵

An SEIU postcard mailer obtained by the Rhode Island Center for Freedom & Prosperity, combined with the fact that legislatively scheduled raises have not been implemented, raises serious questions about whether or not the Raimondo administration and the Services Employees International Union conspired to assist SEIU in making a dishonest appeal to unionize these home care providers.

More generally, observers of politics in Rhode Island will notice that left-wing activists pushing controversial social issues like abortion and same-sex marriage are often funded by government labor unions. NEARI's PAC, for example, gave \$20,000 to the central group advocating for same-sex marriage. That group's director, coincidentally, was Raymond Sullivan, a graduate of a \$15,000-per-year private school⁶ whom NEARI paid \$502,040 from 2011 through 2017.

Sometimes, it's difficult to tell where one organization begins and another ends! Sullivan is now a principal of Checkmate Consulting, along with Brad Dufault, whose father, Guy, appears to run Progress RI, which received thousands of dollars from Rhode Island's labor unions. A \$3,000 do-

nation to Progress RI wound up being paid to Checkmate, which also happens to own the property used by Progress RI for its address. Incidentally, NEARI PAC has been operating rent-free, courtesy of the union, for some years (although the PAC may now be catching up on payments).

Ultimately, all of this money comes from dues-paying members. As an example, in the last year for which information is available, NEARI PAC reported \$76,144 in "aggregate" donations from individuals (i.e., less than \$100). Even before *Janus*, members were able, by law, to opt out of explicitly political donations, but the union treats a \$10 donation to "RI PACE" as a dues obligation.⁷

BWEA DUES DEDUCTION FORM

Name (please print) _____
 School/work location _____
 Alternate email _____
 Are you teaching 1/2 time or less? (circle one) YES NO

I. DUES OBLIGATIONS for the 2018-19 SCHOOL YEAR

	1/2 Time	Full Time
NEA.....	\$107.50	\$192.00
NEARI.....	\$221.00	\$442.00
RIPACE.....	\$ 10.00	\$ 10.00
MAP.....	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00
BWEA.....	\$ 79.00	\$174.00
Minimum dues obligation.....	\$420.50	\$821.00

⁵ "Center Questions If SEIU and Raimondo Administration Colluded in Delaying Home Care Pay Raises." RI Center for Freedom & Prosperity. August 19, 2018. rifreedom.org/2018/08/seiu-raimondo-home-care-pay-raises-delay/

⁶ "Raymond Sullivan, Jr." Ballotpedia. ballotpedia.org/Raymond_Sullivan,_Jr. and Bishop Hendricken High School. https://www.hendricken.com/tuition/

⁷ "Statement on MA Report re. Teachers Union Dues-Flow. Just 21% tays Local in RI?" RI Center for Freedom & Prosperity. November 16, 2018. rifreedom.org/2018/11/ma-report-teacher-union-dues/

That being the case, the \$76,144 in donations can be accounted for with seemingly obligatory \$10 donations from the union's 7,259 active members. With \$10 from each active member, the PAC would collect \$72,590. The difference between that estimate and the reported donations could easily have come from the union's 2,299 "educational support members" and 1,633 retired members.

School departments across Rhode Island collect this money from their employees and forward it to the union, which distributes it to the PAC, which hands it off to progressive causes and Democrat candidates.

Increasingly, the money is going directly to the political election of NEARI organizers. Relating to the sidebar on this page, the union's vice president, Valarie Lawson, was elected to the state senate with an unusually large war chest of \$50,128, mainly from labor PACs and union locals, which often maxed out their donations at \$1,000, not to mention a \$500 donation from Planned Parenthood PAC. Similarly, in South Kingstown, union organizer Sarah Markey was elected to the school committee with statewide union support.

A PYRAMID OF POLITICAL FUNDING

This union-member-funded activism flows all the way from the local level up to the national level, with dollar amounts growing along the way. NEARI's national organization gives over \$100,000,000 in grants annually, according to federal tax filings, much of it to a broad array of almost uniformly progressive activist organizations, such as the Center for American Progress and Democracy Alliance, as well as various left-wing identity-group organizations. The federal forms suggest that the national NEA is a \$391 million organization, but only 12% of that (about \$47 million) actually goes toward representational activities.

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Case Study Valarie Lawson

The campaign contributions of one union to a Democrat candidate for General Assembly were especially curious. The Ethics Commission voted on May 21, 2019, to investigate a complaint against Senator Valarie Lawson (D, East Providence) — the paid vice president of NEARI and a teacher. Sen. Lawson twice voted on an "evergreen contract" bill that would give members of her own union increased advantage in contract negotiations.

In 2018, Lawson received a total of \$4,000 from the NEARI PAC. She declared only \$1,000 of this, the maximum she or any candidate can legally receive, on her campaign finance report. The *Providence Journal* reported that the other \$3,000 was paid to her personally for "expenditure listed as other."

To the surprise of many, the Ethics Commission determined that Lawson and her union had not violated the state Code of Ethics. However, the commission narrowly based its determination on the question of whether she received a direct monetary payment *from the vote that she cast*. The public, as well as members of the union, can still take note of the apparent conflict of interest.

Katherine Gregg. "Ethics Commission dismisses GOP complaint against state senator, teachers union official." *Providence Journal*. September 24, 2019. www.providencejournal.com/news/20190924/ethics-commission-dismisses-gop-complaint-against-state-senator-teachers-union-official

Does every teacher, painter, carpenter, clerk, laborer, and other unionized professional in the Ocean State consider him or herself to be part of the “progressive movement in Rhode Island”?

Janus sent shivers through the progressive movement. After the Supreme Court issued its ruling, the director of the left-wing activist group MoveOn.org told the *New York Times*, “If the progressive movement is a navy, they’re trying to take out our aircraft carriers.”⁸ In the same article, the president of the SEIU, Mary Kay Henry, promised that the union would provide “in-kind staff assistance” for progressive groups’ fundraising to make up for the 30% cut in its own budget.

In other words, if the union couldn’t afford to give the cash away, it would provide free labor to activists. “Free,” in this case, actually means “funded by union members.” But if unions spend more time helping radical groups because they have less money, they’ll necessarily be doing less to serve their members.

LOBBYING

Of course, not all funding for political activism is simply given away; RI unions that represent government employees also spend hundreds of thousands of dollars a year on lobbyists to work over legislators. According to reports maintained by the RI Secretary of State, in 2018, 23 such unions reported \$365,187 in payments to lobbyists, with another \$162,809 in monthly or annual payments that were reported as lobbying “values,” but without specific payments. (This might be time that the unions consider to be apportioned for employees’ lobbying that isn’t broken out in specific payments.)

In the second group is long-time NEARI organizer Patrick Crowley, who was listed as the principal lobbying contact for NEARI. Presumably, Crowley oversaw the lobbying work of Checkmate Consulting, for which the union paid

⁸ Noam Scheiber. “Supreme Court Labor Decision Wasn’t Just a Loss for Unions.” *The New York Times*. July 1, 2018. www.nytimes.com/2018/07/01/business/economy/unions-funding-political.html

out \$55,000 that year. According to NEARI’s federal LM-2 form, Crowley made \$134,973 in total disbursements in fiscal year 2018, but 90% of that was supposed to be for actual “representational activities.” Perhaps the lobbying counts as an additional payment on the side.

THE INVISIBLE LINE BETWEEN UNIONS AND THE FAR LEFT

Prominently on the website of NEARI, visitors are informed that the “organization practices active politics not only in the voting booth but also before the RI General Assembly.”⁹ On a long list of issues on which the union has a position is this curious item: “any issues endorsed by coalitions such as Working Rhode Island to enhance the quality of life of all the citizens of the State of Rhode Island.”

What is “Working Rhode Island”? When the left-wing Netroots Nations conference was held in Providence in 2012, a panel discussion featuring local union organizers was titled, “Working Rhode Island: How We Built a Progressive Movement in Rhode Island”:¹⁰

Working across class, generation, ethnic and trade barriers, Working Rhode Island is following the “One Big Union” model in exciting and dynamic ways. Built out of a common need to organize against a conservative Republican governor, the groups assembled around the Working Rhode Island table left the old rules behind to figure out new ways to work together against common enemies.

The “moderator” was none other than Patrick Crowley, whose bio includes his stint “chasing then Republican Senator... Lincoln Chafee around the State... in a George W. Bush mask and a flight suit.” The union representatives on the panel were Scott Duhamel of the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades, George Nee of the AFL-CIO, and Robert Walsh of NEARI.

The obvious question is: Does every teacher, painter, carpenter, clerk, laborer, and other unionized professional in the Ocean State consider him or herself to be part of the “progressive movement in Rhode Island”?

⁹ “Learn about NEARI’s lobbying efforts.” National Education Association of Rhode Island. <http://www.neari.org/Issues/Legislative-Program>

¹⁰ “Working Rhode Island: How We Built a Progressive Movement in Rhode Island.” Netroots Nation. www.netrootsnation.org/nn_events/nn-12/rhode-island-progressive-movement/

What “progressive” means will differ depending on who is speaking — and progressives will of course use feel-good phrases and images to put the best light on their policies — but in general, a progressive movement would advance:

- Unrestricted abortion
- Radical policies on sex and gender
- Gun control and even confiscation
- Socialized healthcare
- Direct and aggressive wealth redistribution
- Divisive identity politics
- Restrictions on religious liberty
- Open borders and unrestricted immigration
- Burdensome regulations restricting the economy
- And the list goes on...

THE ORGANIZERS’ CUT

In 2019, the RI Center for Freedom & Prosperity noted the cost of the union organizations themselves have to be counted in the price premium of unionization.¹¹ With this report’s focus on public-sector unions’ involvement in politics, it’s important to remember that the ability to hand out favors and crony jobs is a *political* tool as much as a financial one.

In the “Inside the Money-Go-Round” section above, we mentioned Ray Sullivan’s seamless move from activism to union work. However, Sullivan first came to public awareness as a state representative. As also highlighted above, union organizers have been breaching the barrier between activism and public office-holding, but the difference is only in the order in which positions are held. Public election and public *employment* are ways both to reward allegiance and friendship and to seed government with allies and friends.

The sidebar on the next page provides the case study of George Nee, whose involvement with multiple boards has made him one of the most prominent examples.

ESCAPING THE WEB

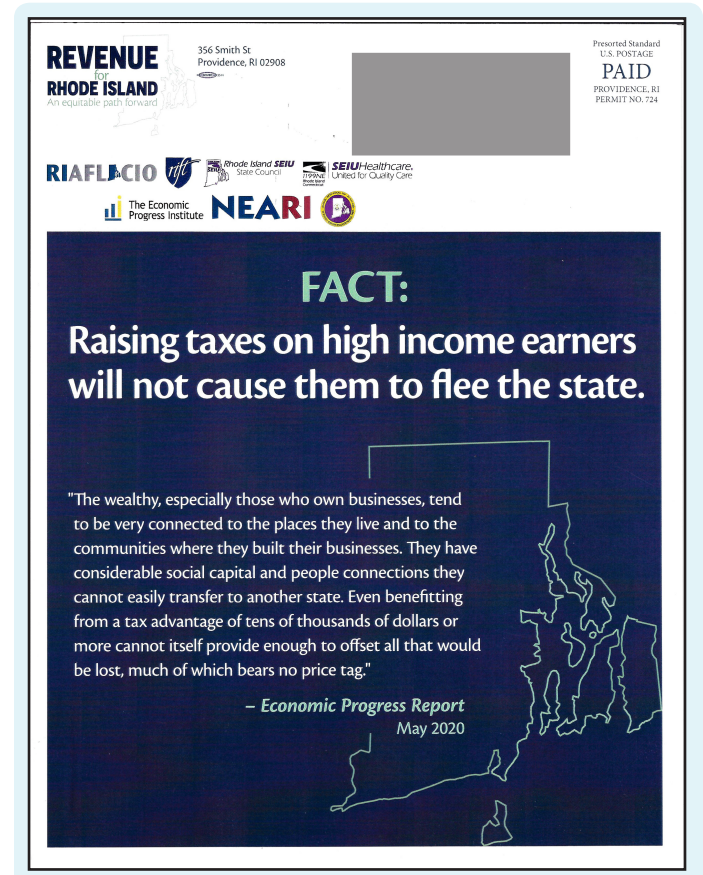
For years, the RI Center for Freedom & Prosperity has been warning Ocean State policymakers and voters that the far-left policies of our corrupt insider system of government — with the heavy regulations that give it power and the high taxes that pay its costs — is driving productive residents out

of the state. As Rhode Islanders seek to turn their talents and labor into household income to support their families, they increasingly find they must look elsewhere.

Economics are not the whole story, however. Large portions of Rhode Islanders’ tax dollars flow through the union dues of hard-working government employees and fund a political machine that makes change impossible. Many conclude that there is no hope for change and therefore no reason to stay.

With the upcoming election in the midst of a global pandemic, Rhode Island’s labor unions are already rolling out major mailings of giant glossy postcards pushing progressive policies. A central plank is a class-warfare campaign to increase taxes on upper-income Rhode Islanders. And as the image below shows, they are getting defensive about the Center’s observations about taxpayer flight.

Naturally, higher taxes and more government spending create more need for union members to administer the spending and more jobs to hand out, as well as more money and influence for union organizers. Additionally, the labor unions are not pushing tax increases in isolation from other progressive policies. Rather, their self interests are fully integrated with progressives’ ideology and its identity politics, grievances, and radical views about human sexuality.



¹¹ Dennis P. Sheehan and Justin Katz. “Public Union Excesses: The Cost of Collective Bargaining and Public Sector Unions in Rhode Island.” RI Center for Freedom & Prosperity. May 2019. rifreedom.org/wp-content/uploads/Rhode-Island-Public-Union-Excesses.pdf

Case Study George Nee

Union Pooh Bah George Nee sits at the top of Rhode Island's labor union pyramid. As president of the Rhode Island AFL-CIO, Nee's union is an umbrella organization covering even other large labor unions like NEARI and AFSCME, as well as a variety of others, such as the union for journalists at the state's major daily newspaper, the *Providence Journal*.

According to the AFL-CIO's 990 filing with the IRS as a non-profit organization, Nee made \$141,408 in 2018, along with \$54,667 in retirement and other benefits. However, his position may provide the opportunity for income from a variety of other sources.

One thing that makes Nee especially notable in the Ocean State is the authority he's claimed on various important boards in and around government. Most notably he has long been on the Board of Directors for the state's Commerce Corporation, a quasi-public entity that handles policy and programs for economic development. Similarly, he is a long-time member of the Governor's Workforce Board, which gives grants to selected businesses and organizations. Nee is also the Vice Chairman of the board of the quasi-public Rhode Island Convention Center.

With this level of involvement, it isn't surprising that Nee's name frequently comes up when the news cycle happens upon stories involving the use of power to seed the government payroll with cronies. For example, it appears that the Governor's Workforce Board filled a gap in funding previously provided by the state Department of Education to an organization called Year Up at around the time Brigid Nee (who appears to be George's daughter) joined Year Up's

development team. In fiscal year 2020, the board gave Year Up \$108,750 of the \$193,029 in state taxpayer money the organization took in that year.

As controversy and lawsuits dragged out concerning an infamous loan guarantee that the Commerce Corporation (at the time called the Economic Development Corp.) provided to game developer 38 Studios, emails emerged of Nee attempting to secure a job at the company for the daughter of one of his AFL-CIO pals.

Most recently, when crony employment and opaque finances at the Rhode Island Convention Center became a story of political interest in the state, Nee's name came up again. His sister-in-law is apparently the administrative assistant to the organization's executive director.

This is surely not an exhaustive list. In 2006, Nee was forced out of another coveted board membership with the organization that handles the state's lucrative workers' compensation insurance, Beacon Mutual Insurance, after a management scandal. That position had paid Nee \$20,000 and (given the evidence of similar arrangements) probably came with additional perks, too.

"American Federation of Labor & Congress of Industrial Orgs, Rhode Island." ProPublica Nonprofit Explorer. <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/50283562>

Justin Katz. "At the Top of the Patronage Network." *Ocean State Current*. February 27, 2020. oceanstatecurrent.com/investigative-report/at-the-top-of-the-patronage-network

"Expenditures by payee for Fiscal Year (FY) 2020." State of Rhode Island Open Government Transparency. www.ri.gov/opengovernment/browse/by_vendor/22301?fiscal_year=2020

"R.I.Gov. Carcieri Pulls Nomination of Beacon Mutual Whistleblower." *Insurance Journal*. June 21, 2007. www.insurancejournal.com/news/east/2007/06/21/81003.htm

All of this activism (not to mention personal benefit for politicians, union organizers, and far-left ideologues) comes at the expense of government employees, who act as a pass-through for taxpayer dollars. For many union members, it also comes with a direct assault on their own principles. Only the most radical government employees could possibly agree with every political cause that benefits from labor union support in the political arena, and not only are many of them not represented well, politically, when it comes to labor unions, but they are forced to help pay for an attack on their own beliefs and values. They are also forced to be part of the web of corruption that harms their families and violates the rights of their neighbors.

APPENDIX

Tables 1–3 provide the data used for the figures above.

Table 1
RI Public-Sector Unions Number of Political Contributions by Recipient Party, 2018

	Democrat	Republican	Independent	Total
NEARI	47	1	1	49
RIFT	35	1	1	37
RIBCO	71	1	0	72
RISAFF	60	0	1	61
Council 94	42	0	1	43
AFL-CIO	74	2	1	77
Total	329	5	5	339

Source: Campaign finance reports available through ricampaignfinance.com

Table 2
RI Public-Sector Unions Amount of Political Contributions by Recipient Party, 2018

	Democrat	Republican	Independent	Total
NEARI	\$17,275	\$750	\$400	\$18,425
RIFT	\$9,380	\$600	\$200	\$10,180
RIBCO	\$31,000	\$600	\$0	\$31,600
RISAFF	\$18,750	\$0	\$100	\$18,850
Council 94	\$16,500	\$0	\$500	\$17,000
AFL-CIO	\$22,000	\$350	\$100	\$22,450
Total	\$114,905	\$2,300	\$1,300	\$118,505

Source: Campaign finance reports available through ricampaignfinance.com

Table 3
RI Public-Sector Unions Amount of Political Contributions by Recipient Party, 2000–2017

	Democrat	Republican	Candidates	Parties	Total
NEA	\$351,572	\$5,550	\$282,972	\$79,450	\$362,422
RIFT	\$318,127	\$4,450	\$251,115	\$74,862	\$325,977
RIBCO	\$326,496	\$4,075	\$308,921	\$16,650	\$325,571
RISAFF	\$208,495	\$1,075	\$175,320	\$35,750	\$211,070
AFSCME	\$258,540	\$1,100	\$219,065	\$42,625	\$261,690
SEIU	\$40,200	\$495	\$39,845	\$950	\$40,795
Trooper Association	\$142,165	\$9,600	\$136,915	\$12,600	\$149,515
Other	\$18,675	\$300	\$18,325	\$200	\$18,525
Total	\$1,664,270	\$26,645	\$1,432,478	\$263,087	\$1,695,565

Note: Data for named unions includes other affiliates of their national organizations.

Source: PublicUnionFacts.com



About the Center

The Rhode Island Center for Freedom and Prosperity, a nonpartisan, 501(c)(3) nonprofit public policy think tank, is the state's leading free-enterprise research and advocacy organization. The Center works to make a profound, positive impact on the lives of every family and business in the state through the vigorous exchange of market-based ideas and reform solutions aimed at restoring economic competitiveness, educational opportunities, and ultimately hope for a more prosperous future.

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