

Michigan Chamber Calls For Reversal of Granholm Administration's Plan to Politicize the State's Civil Service

The Michigan Chamber of Commerce today called on the Granholm Administration to reverse its decision to seek outside legal counsel to assist the Office of State Employer in working out letters of understanding with state employee labor organizations to have the State of Michigan provide payroll deduction for union designated Political Action Committees (PACs) from the paychecks of classified civil service employees.

David Fink is the State Employer, who was appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the governor.

"Under current Civil Service rules, political activity is a prohibited subject of bargaining between the Office of State Employer (OSE) and the state employee unions," said Robert LaBrant, Senior Vice President and General Counsel at the Michigan Chamber. "Despite that ban, letters of understanding on PAC payroll deduction have been proposed between the OSE and certain state employee unions, but have not yet been officially submitted to the Civil Service Commission."

According to LaBrant, prior to officially submitting these contracts to the Civil Service Commission for approval, the Granholm Administration has put out a Request for Bid (RFP-071305). The Granholm Administration now seeks outside legal advice on how the State of Michigan in future contracts can administer a PAC payroll deduction program for state classified civil servants.

"What the Granholm Administration is really asking for is advice on how to do an 'end run' around the Michigan Campaign Finance Act and the Civil Service Commission's own rules which prohibit such activity," LaBrant observed.

LaBrant noted that Michigan has had a unionized civil service for nearly 40 years. No previous administration, Democrat or Republican, has attempted to negotiate a PAC payroll deduction program for civil service employees. However, today, on the eve of the 2006 gubernatorial election, this issue not only is a matter of negotiation, but during a period of tight state budget constraints, warrants by this administration the expense of outside legal counsel.

"These recent events are clearly a turning point for state classified employees. Promotion will either continue to be based upon merit or the state civil service may become so politicized that future promotion will be based upon participation or lack of participation in the union's political action committee," LaBrant concluded.

The Michigan Chamber of Commerce is a statewide business organization which represents more than 6,500 employers, trade associations and local chambers of commerce. The Michigan Chamber was established in 1959 to be an advocate for Michigan's job providers in the legislative, political and legal process.

SOURCE: Michigan Chamber of Commerce

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