

SEIU LOCAL 509 QUESTIONNAIRE

Candidate: Owen R. Broadhurst Campaign Phone #: 413.786.1508
Office being Sought: State Representative District: Third Hampden District
Mailing Address: 96 Elbert Rd., Agawam, MA 01001-3202 Party: Green-Rainbow
Campaign Manager: James Ian Broadhurst Today's date: 6/12/06
Campaign (primary/general/both): general Incumbent's Name: Rep Daniel Keenan (retired)

1) Would you support establishing a \$4 million Quality Care Fund Initiative for unionized private sector human service workers? This fund would provide funding for pay increases provided those increases are conditioned on the completion of training programs. This would dramatically improve the quality of care provided at these agencies by improving training and reducing turnover. In order to ensure the program is not abused, it would need to be contractually enforceable. A similar initiative was enacted in Connecticut and lead to decreases in staff turnover and improvements in the quality of care.

YES X _____

2) Would you as a Legislator endorse union organizing drives in the public and private sector including walking picket lines, contacting employers who are engaged in unfair labor practices, and otherwise supporting workers rights to organize in a neutral environment?

YES X _____

3) As has been well documented, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts recently faced a severe fiscal crisis. Many of the devastating cuts suffered during that crisis – most notably in the area of human services. Will you support generating additional revenue to restore these devastating cuts?

YES X _____

What kinds of revenue enhancement would you support and what kinds would you oppose?

I very much oppose regressive taxation, and support a Fair Tax plan to combat the fiscal crisis.

You pay more than an income tax. In fact, the biggest drain on your wallet in terms of taxes may well be the total accumulated cost of your home's property tax, your vehicle's excise tax, the sales tax on nearly all of the goods you purchase, and the many fees you need to pay simply to live in this state. Such fees as those associated with driver's license renewal, vehicle registration, homestead protection, sewer service, kindergarten enrollment in many communities, participation in school sports or band, et cetera, certainly well add up. Taken together with your sales tax, excise tax, tangible property tax, and income tax, you're paying - as a portion of your annual income - far more than the wealthiest among us for far less of a return in terms of services.

You pay too much in taxes already. However, your tangible property values are still on the rise, which means your municipal taxes are still on the rise no matter how much your communities might reduce your tax rate. Fees continue to rise, even as the cost of living continues to rise. You're being squeezed, squashed, and steamrolled - many now have trouble making ends meet - while those who can afford to pay the most actually pay the least, if they're paying much of anything at all. Massachusetts reputedly has a flat income tax, but your total tax burden has a regressive impact. You're being overburdened. You've paid your share many times over. The time is now to shift the total tax burden, give you some relief, and solve our state's fiscal crisis.

Your communities are suffocating. Many cities and towns cannot afford a music and arts program. Many charge high fees for kindergarten participation. Your sewage and water fees are rising, cutbacks to school budgets are becoming more commonplace, potholes are not being repaired, more citizens are being assessed direct trash removal fees, and few schools will even entertain the notion of elementary school foreign language programs. State aid to cities and towns is dwindling while all costs are rising, and the residents are now being forced to pick up the ball that your state legislature keeps dropping. Teachers are fleeing to far better wages in Connecticut. City workers are watching actual wages fall as compared to the cost of living. Our communities are hurting.

You're subsidizing the fat cats

Raytheon and Fidelity barely pay taxes at all. The likelihood is that you have paid a far more significant income tax than they have. Your Democratic Party legislature gave huge tax breaks to Raytheon and Fidelity, created monstrous tax loopholes enabling the largest of corporations to dance around paying their fair share of the burden, and afforded monstrous tax breaks - to no one's surprise - to their largest campaign contributors. Your total tax burden is quite likely greater than 8% of your paycheck, while for the wealthiest that figure's only slightly more than 4%. Politicians and their fat cat contributors are having a rip-roaring party for themselves - and you're the folks that are buying their meals and picking up their beer tab. It is time to decline the tab.

Repealing the Raytheon and Fidelity tax breaks would generate more than an additional \$220 million in revenue for the state. Closing corporate "combine reporting" loopholes would generate over \$97 million for the state. Applying a transfer tax to sales of higher end real estate would generate over \$500 million for the state. Repealing the sales tax exemption on services such as lobbying, legal and accounting services, engineering services, business consulting, public relations and financial management would generate over \$530 million for the state. Implement a 30 cent per pound tax on the top ten carcinogens, and over \$115 million in revenue would be raised. An intangible property tax on financial instruments of \$2 per \$1000 with a \$50,000 deductible would generate nearly \$500 million for the state. This yields nearly **\$2 billion in revenue raised** without raising **your** taxes.

Raise income tax to 6% and lower sales tax to 4%, and - through that alone - a very large portion of the voters in this district would know tax relief while overall revenue would be raised. Earmark but 20% of revenue raised by the sales tax to cities and towns, and your communities would have incentive to give tax relief as well. Raytheon paid only \$456 in state taxes in the year 2000. How much did you pay? How much less could you pay with an efficient and fair tax plan? Payoffs for layoffs are killing public education, health care, police and fire departments. You're being priced out of your homes to pick up the burden. There's just no rational excuse for that.

I have a plan

Not one opposing candidate has embraced such a plan, and if any do then it shall be because they have seen it here first. I should note, for the record, that I have not devised this plan alone but have rather been inspired by the groundbreaking vision and research of 2004 First Franklin District candidate Nat Fortune, the Massachusetts Coalition for Healthy Communities and the Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center. The fiscal crisis this state is in was **manufactured** by politicians and my plan is similar to many fair tax plans advanced by policy experts ignored by the legislature now for nearly twenty years. It is time to stop ignoring common sense and start implementing it. It is with this plan or similar plans that we must begin.

It is only through tax fairness that we can have tax efficiency. This plan, if implemented, would result in lower taxes for more than 80% of the state's population while generating over 15% more revenue for cities and towns. Lower sales tax to 4%, raise income tax to 6%, earmark 20% of sales tax for cities and towns, close corporate tax loopholes, stop corporate tax giveaways, double individual and dependent tax exemptions, double the limited income tax deduction, apply transfer tax to properties valued at more than \$400,000, repeal the sales tax exemption for lobbyists and fat cat services, implement an intangible property tax with a \$50,000 deductible, institute a carcinogen production tax - and build healthier communities for all.

Tax relief can only result from ending corporate welfare. The latter shall ultimately fuel the former. This candidate urges implementing combined reporting and "throwback" rules for companies shifting profits out of state; repealing special sales tax breaks for lobbyists, mutual fund companies and defense contractors; and providing incentives for cities and towns to reduce tax rates on tangible properties. No trickle-down so-called "fiscal stimulus" package is worth what mayhem this legislature so relishes committing against health and human services, schools and city services, municipal employees, people in poverty, nearly all taxpayers in general, and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts itself.

4) A recent trend in health care has been to shift costs to the worker. In the early 1990's the courts ruled that the state legislature has the authority to establish the funding level of state workers health insurance. The funding level and percentage workers pay for their health insurance is set annually in the state's fiscal years budget. The current worker contribution rate, for most workers, will be

15% effective January 1, 2006. Would you oppose an increase in the rate state workers (current and future) pay for their health insurance?

YES X _____

Effective January 1, 2006, workers hired after July 1, 2003, will be paying 20% of their health insurance costs while the vast majority of their colleagues pay 15%. Will you support returning those workers to 15%?

YES X _____

5) SEIU Local 509, along with the Coalition of Families and Advocates for Full Access, recently filed a Right to Know bill that would require the Department of Mental Retardation to produce an online report card of several quality of care indicators. Currently, families trying to find homes and programs for their loved ones can not access information vital to making the best decision. You can more comparative information when buying a toaster oven than when you choose a group home. Will you support this Right to Know legislation?

YES X _____

6) There is legislation filed in the Massachusetts Legislature that would create a single payer health insurance system. This government run system would guarantee health insurance to all the citizens of the Commonwealth. Would you support a single payer system?

YES X _____

7) The Commonwealth has increasingly used the privatization of state service as a way to, in theory, save money. Numerous reports have indicated that real savings are illusive, but it is clear that the private sector workers providing the services are paid much less. Do you support privatization of state services which cuts workers salaries and benefits or strips them of their union?

NO X _____

8) News stories about the failure of the State to protect children at risk from dangerous situations highlight the need to give greater attention to these children. The Child Welfare League of America has recommended decreasing caseloads for Department of Social Services (DSS) social workers to a 15:1 ratio? Would you support legislation to fund 15:1 caseload level in DSS?

YES X _____

9) Would you support legislation requiring employers to notify their employees when they monitor their work on computers or telephones?

YES X _____

10) Local 509 represents about 1,500 workers in the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA). DTA is responsible for administering welfare programs in the Commonwealth. Recent welfare reform at the federal level removed language that required all states to use public employees to provide many welfare services, thus opening this area to possible privatization. Would you support legislative language which protects these workers from having their jobs privatized?

YES X _____

11) Currently, a wide variety of welfare services are funded through the DTA budget. Private agencies contract with DTA to provide many of these services. Would you support allowing qualified DTA workers to be utilized to provide similar services?

YES X _____

12) As you know, abortion is a legal medical procedure. In 1996 the legislature voted to reestablish insurance coverage for this medical procedure for state employees. Would you have voted for legislation allowing for the GIC to cover legal abortions for state workers?

YES X _____

13) Would you support the reinstatement of the death penalty in Massachusetts?

NO X _____