

Vocal Minority Creates Petition Against Re-Vote

by Christine Stuart | Jul 11, 2011 5:00am CT NEWS JUNKIE



Christine Stuart file photo - Union leaders from all 15 unions that are part of the State Employees Bargaining Agent Coalition

The state employees who helped defeat the concession package are joining forces again to ensure that SEBAC does not change its bylaws to push through a clarified version of the first deal—which the smaller “vote no” faction did not like, but which would have preserved the jobs of nearly 6,500 fellow state workers.

The website votenotoconcessions.com, which helped encourage employees to vote against the first concession package, is promoting a [petition](#) asking union leadership to keep the current bylaws responsible in part for the defeat of the package.

Four of the 15 unions voted against the package causing its defeat even when 57 percent of the voting members approved it. The General Assembly then increased Gov. Dannel P. Malloy’s rescission authority from 5 percent to 10 percent. He has said he will need to layoff off nearly 6,500 employees in order to achieve the \$1.6 billion in savings.

The petition against a re-vote and changes to the bylaws was signed by nearly [82 individuals](#) as of Sunday evening. It is also being circulated in a paper version.

“We the undersigned, represent many unions that fall under SEBAC. We ask that you not change the current by-laws of SEBAC as they have been in place for many years and were found to be sufficient when previous SEBAC agreements were ratified. The rank and file members would also like to be more active in the negotiation stage of structuring and further SEBAC agreements,” the petition says.

The comment thread on the petition supports the sentiment.

“The first time the unions voted against an agreement by SEBAC and now they want to change the rules for ratification - NO WAY! I will accept a layoff in order to make this governor understand that

he needs to stop the spending,” Donna Roberto wrote Saturday when she signed her name to the petition.

“NO means NO — next time, have the courtesy and brains to have us (the end users) give our experience and input before slopping together garbage and assuming that we’d just go along with it,” Paul McKenna wrote when he signed his name.

In order to sign the petition you must make a donation. It’s unclear where the donations will be going.

Other comments were similar, but union leadership still believe they represent a minority of its membership.

“This petition regarding possible changes to bylaws appears to reflect the concerns of a small minority of union members,” Matt O’Connor, SEBAC spokesman, said. “We are a coalition of democratic organizations that respect the voices of their members, so of course they are encouraged to share their opinions with their elected leaders.”

The review of the bylaws is already underway.

“Union leadership has already committed to reviewing SEBAC bylaws to see if they ‘reflect both the democratic values of the unions which make up the coalition, and the lessons learned from experience’,” O’Connor said Sunday. “Those discussions are ongoing.”

But some members, such as the state employee who runs the votenotconcessions website but refuses to disclose his name, said, “It appears that SEBAC and the Malloy administration want to change the rules to fit their agenda.”

“It is not the bylaws that are in question but the agreement itself. Even if the bylaws were changed to a super majority the concessions still would not have passed. A simple majority vote on pensions and benefits is absurd and would give SEBAC more power over its members,” he added.

But Malloy seems to disagree. Repeatedly over the last week Malloy has said, “In most instances, if you get 57 percent of the vote you get elected.”

Although Malloy has also expressed little confidence in the unions’ ability to get a deal done before the Aug. 31 deadline. In an effort to figure out how they planned to move forward, Malloy sent his lead negotiator to speak with them last week.

[Click here](#) to read the petition from some union members asking for a re-vote.