

# Forced-Unionism Abuses Exposed

The facts Big Labor bosses would rather you didn't hear about.

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*Compulsory unionism breeds corruption. In each issue of "Exposed," the National Right to Work Committee will highlight yet another example of union-boss abuse spawned and perpetuated by Big Labor's government-granted privilege to force workers to pay union dues, or be fired.*

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## **Boss of So-Called 'Union for the Poor' Brags: 'Nobody Throws a Party Like We Do'**

Flamboyant Big Apple union boss Dennis Rivera, president of the 300,000-member Local 1199 of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), undeniably knows how to have a good time.

Citing the union's filings with the U.S. Labor Department, the New York *Daily News* reported September 24 that the Local 1199 hierarchy spent more than \$2 million on parties and out-of-town conferences in 2005. For example, Local 1199 bosses spent \$465,000 on a summer retreat at Lake Placid, N.Y., attended by nearly 700 union staffers. The retreat included canoeing, mountain biking, a scavenger hunt, and a big party, as well as morning union "strategy sessions."

Mr. Rivera spent more than \$9200 in one night at Broadway's Firebird Russian Restaurant wining and dining 50 representatives of a Maryland union he was then eyeing for takeover. And Local 1199's annual holiday party at the Club Copacabana in west Manhattan cost nearly \$500,000, when hotel bills for out-of-town union professionals are included.

But no one should assume that Local 1199 officers and staff members spend all their time partying. The union's Labor Department filings show that in 2005 Local 1199 bosses disbursed even more cash on "political activities and lobbying" – a total of just over \$16,000,000 – than they did on parties and other recreation.

Seventy-three of the union's 75 paid officers spent at least 20% of their working hours on politics and lobbying. Hundreds of paid staff members also spent a substantial part of the year, if not most of it, on political and lobbying assignments.

And the vast majority of the tens of millions of dollars that Local 1199 bosses directly and indirectly spend every year on bashes, junkets, politics, and lobbying come from compulsory union dues and fees that hospital and nursing home workers are forced by law to fork over in order to keep their jobs.

Every year, Mr. Rivera and his cohorts extract roughly \$500 per full-time worker in forced dues and fees. At the same time, Local 1199-“represented” employees have to hand over an additional estimated \$120 apiece to the SEIU international union brass.

These are workers who make as little as \$6.75 an hour, New York’s minimum wage. And they and their families have to make ends meet in some of the most expensive jurisdictions in the entire U.S.

When the *Daily News* wondered how Mr. Rivera, as the chief of a union that purports to look after the interests of “some of the poorest workers in New York City,” could justify Local 1199 bosses’ handling of the forced-dues money they rake in, he was unapologetic: “To be honest, not only are we good in politics, but nobody throws a party like we do.”

Anyway, Mr. Rivera insisted, seemingly extravagant expenditures like the Lake Placid “exercises” all “help build the union” and thus, of course, must benefit the hundreds of thousands of forced dues-paying workers who aren’t invited to participate.

Could Mr. Rivera really suppose the Local 1199-“represented” hospital orderlies, cafeteria helpers and home care workers who are currently making the minimum New York employers are legally required to pay them are so naïve? Naïve enough to think they’d be making even less if Mr. Rivera weren’t one of the most influential political powerbrokers in New York City, and Local 1199 coffers weren’t overflowing with forced-dues dollars?

Mr. Rivera certainly doesn’t seem worried about bad publicity emanating from Local 1199’s federal filings. “We’re going to keep doing what we’re doing, and we’re going to keep being successful,” he told the *Daily News*. “Why should we change a formula that’s working?” But the reason Mr. Rivera is so blasé certainly isn’t because he thinks most of the workers in his empire like how their forced-dues money is being spent.

Rather, he knows that the Local 1199 rank and file must keep shelling out \$500 a year to the union, like it or not, or be fired. And since Local 1199 members are overwhelmingly employed in private facilities, and are thus covered by federal labor law, it’s Congress that’s responsible for forcing them to bankroll Big Labor parties and politics many would never voluntarily support.

The case of Dennis Rivera is just another illustration of why Congress should vote on, and adopt, H.R. 500 and S. 370, pending legislation that would abolish private-sector union bosses’ privilege to get workers fired for refusing to pay dues or fees to an unwanted union.

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