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## forum left

Should Ohio voters pass or reject State Issue 2?

### SB5: A recipe for economic disaster

By RANA ODEH

What do the following things have in common? Ohio Senate Bill 5 (SB5), Governor John Kasich, the Cato Institute, Americans for Prosperity, the Tea Party and the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC). The answer is the Koch brothers, or to be more accurate, it is "Koch DNA," to use a phrase coined by Lisa Graves of the Center for Media and Democracy. Charles and David Koch, multibillionaires and owners of Koch Industries, one of the largest privately-held companies in the U.S. with annual revenues exceeding \$100 billion, are right-wing ideologues and free-market fundamentalists. SB5 is simply one of a long list of "model bills" that has been drafted by ALEC and pushed through state legislations across the country.

Our own Ohio Governor John Kasich was one of the key movers and shakers in ALEC back when it was getting off the ground in the mid-1980s. The idea was very simple: bring together right-wing policymakers and business leaders to draft "model bills" that promote business interests, very often to the detriment of workers, pensioners, consumers and the environment. This is market fundamentalism at its best and democracy at its worst.

In Ohio's case, it was so easy. A simple recipe: Cato Institute (co-founded by Charles

nius to figure this out. When workers make a good living, they spend their income on goods and services, companies earn more revenues and hire more employees. Likewise, consumers contribute more taxes, the need for so many unemployment-related social services goes down and naturally the deficit goes away. To paraphrase John Maynard Keynes, the famous British economist who is credited for saving capitalism from what seemed to be its certain demise in the 1930s, the lesson is simple: take care of unemployment, and the deficit will take care of itself; meaning that less unemployment will automatically reduce government spending and increase tax revenues. All we need to do is stop enacting laws that undermine the purchasing power of the working class.

Just because market fundamentalists were successful in busting private sector unions across the country since the 1980s, does not mean that they have the right to rob 400,000 Ohio state employees from their right to collective bargaining for health insurance and pensions, and their right to strike. Besides being a recipe for an economic disaster, SB5 will not even achieve what it purports to do, namely reducing the deficit. What will happen is that state employees will be forced to contribute

**"This is market fundamentalism at its best and democracy at its worst."**

Koch in 1977) provided the so-called scientific evidence (after all, you can't argue with the Cato economists), Americans for Prosperity and the Tea Party did the political leg work at the local level under the cover of the Building a Better Ohio political action committee. ALEC drafts SB5, Koch money was sprinkled throughout the process, and the icing on the cake, of course, was delivered by no less than our ALEC headmaster, Governor Kasich, in March 2011 with the passage of SB5.

The attack on Ohio teachers, firefighters, police officers and other state employees has outraged Ohio citizens of all political persuasions. More than 1.3 million Ohioans have signed the petition to repeal SB5, and despite all the media propaganda, a recent Quinnipiac University poll shows that the anti-SB5 movement is leading by a 25-point margin (57 percent "No" vs. 32 percent "Yes" on State Issue 2).

The ingenious excuse that Governor Kasich has fabricated to push through his ALEC-sponsored SB5 is the \$8 billion Ohio state budget deficit, which was a result of an economic crisis that had nothing to do with Ohio state employees. If anything, it was the market fundamentalist deregulation efforts led by the Koch brothers and the Cato Institute since the beginning of the Reagan era in the 1980s that has brought about anti-workers free trade policies, which have deindustrialized much of the country and ruined the standard of living for most Americans. It is mass unemployment that causes the deficit to increase.

Unions are the only democratic process that can sustain the purchasing power of working families. You don't have to be a ge-

more to their health insurance and pension plans and they will see their jobs privatized into non-union corporations. That has been the plan all along. That's what happens when we outsource our democratic process to a private interest group like ALEC to vote and pre-approve model bills behind closed doors without any transparency.

Where is the media when we need it? What happened to investigative journalism? Does anybody remember the fourth estate? Oh, that's right, they are in the pockets of the Murdochs and the Koch brothers of the world, but against all odds, Ohioans have uncovered the market fundamentalist plot, and will defeat SB5.

Tuesday, November 8 is going to be the day when Ohioans will set the record straight, and send Governor Kasich and his ALEC buddies a clear message: Back off from our pensions, health care, our rights and our livelihood! We're going to take back our labor rights and our democracy. We know whose interests you're really protecting and we're not going to let you get away with it.



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