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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SEACC Fights Workers' Union Victory

Conservation group challenges Labor Board decision granting union election

JUNEAU Alaska (Áak'w K̄wáan Territory), **February 17, 2023** — Southeast Alaska Conservation Council continued to fight its workers' federal right to unionize today when it filed a challenge to [the National Labor Relations Board's February 13 decision](#) granting [SEACC United](#) a formal union election.

The Labor Board's Monday decision dismissed SEACC's "numerous novel arguments," and affirmed that "the Board has broad jurisdiction over nearly all types of private employers, large and small, for-profit and non-profit." The Board directed ballots to be mailed to eligible employees on February 23, 2023, and counted on March 30, 2023.

Rather than allowing the union to move ahead with a NLRB-sanctioned election, SEACC hired the law firm Littler Mendelson — the same firm hired by Starbucks to represent management and dismantle union formations by employees — to fight the election under the dubious claim that the organization does not participate in interstate commerce. This, despite SEACC board chair, Natalie Watson's claim in a December 30, 2022 [Juneau Empire op-ed](#) that the decision to hire the law firm was "not, as some have erroneously claimed, to oppose the process." The op-ed went on to claim the organization would "stand by the results." Instead, Gregory Fisher of Littler Mendelson filed a 42-page Request for Review with the NLRB on SEACC's behalf today, challenging the Board-sanctioned election.

Emily Brill reported this week in [Law360](#) that, "In Monday's decision, [NLRB regional director Ronald K.] Hooks held that the Southeast Alaska Conservation Council engages in interstate commerce. The council has made 'tens of thousands of dollars' in purchases from sources outside the state of Alaska, accepted money from sources outside Alaska and concerned itself with 'issues of national, international, and even global concern,' Hooks wrote."

SEACC United was formed by a public supermajority of non-management employees on December 9, 2022, in accordance with the National Labor Relations Act. The union submitted a request to SEACC leadership for voluntary recognition on December 12. When SEACC declined to recognize its workers' democratically established union by the December 16 deadline, the union filed a petition for election with the NLRB, in the absence of a good-faith request for more time. A successful NLRB election would further verify the union's majority, establishing recognition and securing its members' federal rights to union representation.

“SEACC and board leadership have repeatedly claimed they would respect our right to form a union. Yet they are appealing the decision made by the NLRB,” says Lauren Cusimano, communications lead at SEACC. “It would appear SEACC would rather spend ‘a ton of money’ fighting a losing battle against unionization rather than recognizing the role of their employees to be represented.” Cusimano’s statement refers to SEACC executive director, Meredith Trainor’s January 3, 2022 acknowledgement to the [Juneau Empire](#) that “It’s cost a ton of money and time over the past few weeks to focus on this issue.”

“We’re in agreement that the decision to appeal is disappointing but not surprising. We remain committed to each other and the future of SEACC United, and are hearing from supporters more than ever,” said Heather Evoy, SEACC’s climate organizer.

Southeast Alaska Conservation Council is a Juneau-based nonprofit with employees in Juneau, Haines, Sitka, and Prince of Wales Island.

SEACC United is part of the Communications Workers of America, District 7, an AFL-CIO affiliate. The union’s vision statement and past press releases can be found at seaccunited.org. Updates from SEACC United may be viewed on social media sites Twitter, Instagram, and Mastodon under [@seaccunited](#) and [@SEACC_United@mastodon.akhepcat.com](#), respectively.

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