



## IRB Charges IBT V.P. Sean O'Brien for Threatening Members

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UPDATED Feb. 10, 2014: Teamster Local 251 members stood up to the intimidation tactics, for their ballots counted and voted for change. The United Action Slate [swept the election](http://www.tdu.org/news/united-action-slate-scores-rhode-island-victory) (<http://www.tdu.org/news/united-action-slate-scores-rhode-island-victory>) on October 31.

On November 1, Sean O'Brien began serving a [14-day suspension](https://www.tdu.org/sites/default/files/Sean%20Obrien%20Appl%20166%20and%20Court%20Approval0001.pdf) ([https://www.tdu.org/sites/default/files/Sean Obrien Appl 166 and Court Approval0001.pdf](https://www.tdu.org/sites/default/files/Sean%20Obrien%20Appl%20166%20and%20Court%20Approval0001.pdf)) from all union positions to settle the charges against him. The reform movement continues to organize to rebuild union power in Providence.

ORIGINAL STORY: International Vice President Sean O'Brien has been charged by the Independent Review Board (IRB) for threatening to "punish" members for running for local union office in Rhode Island Local 251.

[Watch the WPRI \(CBS Affiliate\) news report.](http://www.wpri.com/target-12/tim-white/national-teamster-leader-in-hot-water-over-comments-made-at-ri-rally) (<http://www.wpri.com/target-12/tim-white/national-teamster-leader-in-hot-water-over-comments-made-at-ri-rally>)

O'Brien issued his threats at a campaign event for the incumbents, declaring that Local 251 head Joe Bairos was "one of his closest allies" and that anyone running against him would have a "major problem" after the election and would "need to be punished."

O'Brien's threats violate the Teamster Constitution and federal law (the Landrum Griffin Act), which makes it illegal to threaten to retaliate against members for exercising their union rights.

In addition to being an International Vice President, O'Brien is the President of New England Joint Council 10 and the head of the UPS and Freight grievance panels.

As explained in the [IRB charges](https://tdu.org/sites/default/files/Intnl%20VP%20Sean%20M.%20O%27Brien%20IRB%20Charge.pdf) (<https://tdu.org/sites/default/files/Intnl%20VP%20Sean%20M.%20O%27Brien%20IRB%20Charge.pdf>), O'Brien's "explicit declaration that Bairos' political opponents in the Local Union had a 'major problem', 'need to be punished' and 'need to be held accountable for their actions trying to divide and tear down this Local' was made by a union official with the power to retaliate against these political opponents. The only actions of the opponents involved were challenging the incumbent slate in an election and taking positions within the local different than those Bairos and O'Brien advocated." [IRB charges, pg. 6]

O'Brien claimed in the same speech that he was speaking on behalf of General President Hoffa and Teamsters Local 25.

Bairos, the current head of Local 251, proudly had his campaign post the threats against members on Youtube. The video features O'Brien denouncing the idea that Teamsters should put politics to the side after an election and work together as brothers and sisters:

"You know, TDU's famous for saying how we're all brothers and sisters, we're all taking care of each other and when this is over we'll all be friends. I've got news for you, anybody who takes on my friend, Joe Bairos and his team, or Local 251, they've got a major problem. They'll never be our friends. They need to be punished. They need to be punished and they need to be held

accountable for their actions." [IRB charges, pg. 5]

UPDATE: After this report appeared on TDU.org, the Bairos campaign removed the video broadcasting O'Brien's threats from Youtube.

When testifying under oath on October 4, O'Brien claimed he was the victim of a "poor choice of words" and that Hoffa actually had not endorsed his actions. But the IRB report noted that he never asked Bairos to take it down from Youtube or made any retraction.

Local 251 members are currently voting in the election—at least the members who have not been illegally denied a ballot.

United Action has filed extensive election protests, documenting that Local 251 members at Rhode Island Hospital have been denied ballots by the Local and falsely told they are ineligible to vote, in an attempt to steal the election by the incumbents.

Nearly 2,500 Teamsters are employed at the Hospital.

The IRB, whose three members include one appointed by Hoffa, one by the US Attorney, and one jointly chosen, is charged with ridding the IBT of corruption.

The IRB sent the charges to Hoffa for action on October 17, but the IRB has the final say on O'Brien's punishment. Hoffa has ninety days to hold a hearing and make a decision on punishment, and then the IRB makes the final decision.

At the Local 25 meeting on Sunday, Oct. 20, O'Brien told members that he faced a suspension from union office.

O'Brien appears to be looking to cut a quick deal to resolve the charge so he can serve any suspension ahead of June 2014. Candidates for International Union office in the 2016 International union election have to be in good standing for 24 consecutive months, beginning that date.

At the Local 25 meeting, O'Brien blamed TDU and the internet, not his own illegal threats, for his pending suspension.

For an official so quick to declare that members "deserve to be punished" just for running for office, O'Brien is slow to take responsibility for an actual serious infraction of Teamster ethics and federal law.

**Issues:**

[Local Union Reform \(/issues/local-union-reform\)](#)

[Hoffa Watch \(/issues/hoffa-watch\)](#)

## Comments

Mike Bruggeman replied on Tue, 10/22/2013 - 7:36am [PERMALINK \(/COMMENT/118551#COMMENT-118551\)](#)

[THIS STORY IS ANOTHER EXAMPLE \(/COMMENT/118551#COMMENT-118551\)](#)

This story is another example of idiocy in this Local. I hope members in that Local come out and

vote for new slate. They deserve better representation than what they are getting now.

zephead replied on Tue, 10/22/2013 - 11:35am [PERMALINK \(/COMMENT/118555#COMMENT-118555\)](#)

**[O'BRIEN \(/COMMENT/118555#COMMENT-118555\)](#)**

O'Brien's a f-ing coward for talking that nonsense and his boy Barrios is a creampuff. Two more stooges bent over touching their toes for Hoffa Jr. Guarantee you O'Brien will be the number two on Hall's ticket for the General President. DON'T let it become reality! How about all you UPS and UPS Freight guys, bet you just loved the results you got on all those grievance panels. YEAH! The campaign to stop Hall for General President needs to start NOW!

Randall Whitehouse replied on Tue, 10/22/2013 - 12:58pm [PERMALINK \(/COMMENT/118557#COMMENT-118557\)](#)

**[YOU'RE ABSOLUTELY RIGHT. THE \(/COMMENT/118557#COMMENT-118557\)](#)**

You're absolutely right. The campaign to rid this union of these cowards and their weak bargaining needs to start now. This entire administration needs to be thrown out. There isn't one of them who have done the job that they were elected to do. They have shafted our brothers and sisters at YRC, ABF by scare tactics and corrupt voting practices. Now they are doing the same to UPS and UPS Freight. If we don't get this whole administration out of here soon, then we are doomed as a union. They have tried to divide us and to a point have succeeded, but we are starting to fight back. Whether you agree with some of the things going on or not, we must stand together and back our brothers and sisters and take this union back. Now is the time before it is gone. We are not far from total loss of this wonderful union and these good paying jobs. It's time to take action and show Hoffa and his cronies the door. Stand up and unite. We can be a strong family again.

One more involved replied on Wed, 10/23/2013 - 7:42am [PERMALINK \(/COMMENT/118590#COMMENT-118590\)](#)

**[THE WHOLE THING SHOULD BE \(/COMMENT/118590#COMMENT-118590\)](#)**

The whole thing should be handed over to the feds.....Barrios should also be charged, he thanked Sean for such a great speech.....

"Thank You Sean"

Mike replied on Thu, 10/24/2013 - 7:48pm [PERMALINK \(/COMMENT/118631#COMMENT-118631\)](#)

**[WHATEVER HAPPENED TO STU \(/COMMENT/118631#COMMENT-118631\)](#)**

Whatever happened to Stu Mundy?

Zach Peterson replied on Mon, 11/04/2013 - 12:35pm [PERMALINK \(/COMMENT/119352#COMMENT-119352\)](#)

[THIN SKIN \(/COMMENT/119352#COMMENT-119352\)](#)

TDU needs to grow up and focus on real problems, instead of picking at the local leaders that aren't on board with the TDU program. Blowing these kind of internal disagreements out of proportion simply makes the job of the anti-worker lobby easier. Thanks to TDU, this story has gone all over the media, and is being unfairly used in an effort to discredit all Teamsters. TDU's promotion of this story only proves Sean's point that TDU only real purpose, intended or not, is

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