



## Penalties sought for Teamsters big

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New England's top Teamsters union leader faces penalties that could range from a reprimand to permanent expulsion for allegedly threatening to punish supporters of rivals to his union allies in a Rhode Island union local election.

The Independent Review Board — formed under a federal court order in 1992 to investigate allegations of corruption, domination or control in the Teamsters — has recommended charges against Boston-based Local 25 president Sean O'Brien, who allegedly threatened to retaliate against Teamster members for exercising federally protected "rights to seek election to office and support the candidates of one's choice."

O'Brien also is a regional vice president of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters and president of Joint Council 10, which settles disputes for New England locals, including East Providence's Local 251.

In a speech at a campaign event for Joseph Bairos, an incumbent Local 251 secretary-treasurer up for re-election, O'Brien said anyone who "takes on" Bairos and his team have "got a major problem," according to IRB documents.

O'Brien was referring to Teamsters for a Democratic Union, a reform group opposing incumbent Local 251 officers.

"They'll never be our friends," O'Brien said. "They need to be punished, and they need to be held accountable for their actions."

O'Brien's spokeswoman, Melissa Hurley, said, "There's an internal process that takes place ... We're going to let that process run its course."

IBT's executive board must decide this week to file charges against O'Brien or refer the matter back to the IRB. "The charges will be brought against him — not much doubt about that," IRB administrator John J. Cronin Jr. said. "There are a wide range of penalties ... from fines and reprimands to permanent expulsion."

A suspension could thwart O'Brien's local and national Teamster ambitions, according to David Levin, a TDU organizer. "I think he's trying to get out in front of it and get a short suspension and be back in time to maintain his eligibility."

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