

# Wiley Rein's Michael Toner Discusses SEIU Bid to Increase Political Spending

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*The Boston Globe*  
September 12, 2011

Election Law & Government Ethics Practice co-chair Michael Toner was quoted in a *Boston.com* story on the decision by the Service Employees International Union to create an outside group that can spend limitless amounts of money to influence elections. The tactical change comes after the national labor union previously fought against corporations being permitted to spend unlimited cash on candidates.

According to the article, SEIU officials defended their efforts to raise money, arguing that it would be "irresponsible of them to unilaterally disarm" following last year's Supreme Court's decision in the *Citizens United* case that gave corporations and unions a green light to raise and spend unlimited amounts to advocate for federal candidates.

Mr. Toner pointed out that as long as political activity is not their primary purpose, groups can run ads that advocate directly for or against a candidate's election, without being prohibited from running only issue-oriented ads.

"It's a good example of how the *Citizens United* decision has promoted robust political speech across the spectrum," Mr. Toner said. "There's rightly been a focus on corporations. But labor unions also have much broader latitude, and it sounds like SEIU is taking advantage of that."

## Related Professionals

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## Practice Areas

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Election Law & Government Ethics