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Treasurers And Fiduciaries of Major Funds Call on Largest Asset Managers To Hold Boards Accountable on Political Spending and Reform Own Spending Practices in Aftermath of Capitol Insurrection

NEW YORK -- More than 25 state treasurers and elected fiduciaries and trustees of funds with assets under management of over \$1 trillion are calling on five top asset managers—Vanguard, State Street, Fidelity, JPMorgan Asset Management, and BNY Mellon—to answer for their political contributions and [track records of blocking of shareholder accountability efforts on lobbying and political disclosure](#) in the aftermath of the Capitol Insurrection. The calls build on last month's [letter](#) to BlackRock sent by a number of state treasurers, elected fiduciaries and trustees expressing similar concerns about its corporate political spending and lobbying transparency and practices. [Recent analysis](#) by [Majority Action](#), a nonprofit shareholder advocacy organization, found that the six top asset managers who received the letters contributed more than \$1 million to members of Congress who opposed the election results after the Capitol insurrection through their political action committees (PACs) during the 2016-2020 election cycles.

“The Capitol Insurrection demonstrates how pervasive lack of oversight and accountability for corporate political contributions can be destabilizing for our democracy,” said **Eli Kasargod-Staub**, Executive Director of Majority Action.

Beyond the asset managers' direct contributions to Congress members complicit in the Capitol Insurrection, the signatories are also calling attention to the role of the asset managers' proxy voting in shielding companies from transparency for their political spending. [Five of the six asset managers voted against](#) the majority of the 48 shareholder proposals calling for greater lobbying and political spending disclosure at S&P 500 companies that received at least 20% support in the 2020 shareholder season. BlackRock and Vanguard, the two largest asset managers, voted against all of them.

Coordinated by [Majority Action](#) and [Service Employees International Union](#) (SEIU), which unites two million service and care workers, the signatories are asking each asset manager to respond to the following questions:

- Will you commit to holding companies accountable for comprehensive disclosure of corporate political spending by supporting shareholder proposals calling for greater disclosure, and by voting against those board members charged with the responsibility for overseeing such spending who have failed to do so?
- Under what circumstances will you vote against directors at companies that have failed to comprehensively disclose political spending activity?

- Under what circumstances will you vote against directors for lack of alignment between stated corporate positions and corporate political spending? Given that indirect giving (often referred to as “dark money”) dwarfs direct corporate PAC contributions, how will you consider all such spending, not just direct PAC contributions, in making that determination?
- Will you forswear corporate political spending (direct or indirect) to the 147 members of Congress who voted to overturn the results of a free and fair democratic election on January 6, 2021?
- When and how will you comprehensively disclose and rigorously reassess your own corporate political spending? How will you evaluate whether payments serve to advance the company’s business objectives? What is the role of independent members of the board of directors in the reassessment of your corporate political spending?

“As some of the largest asset management companies in the world, Vanguard, State Street, Fidelity, JPMorgan Asset Management and BNY Mellon have a responsibility to ensure they are making decisions that are in the long-term best interests of its investors,” said SEIU Secretary-Treasurer **Gerry Hudson**. “SEIU takes pride in its mission to build a stronger future for working people and their families. As we continue to keep a close eye on our investments across the union, we review and analyze if those investments continue to speak to those values, and the commitment we have to our members to ensure their retirement funding is being invested transparently.”

“The events of January 6 underscore the urgency of reforming corporate political spending and lobbying transparency practices,” said **Theresa Taylor**, Vice President of the Board of CalPERS. “It is incumbent upon major asset managers to stringently reevaluate their own political spending, as well as their approach to proxy voting in line with standards of responsible stewardship.”

“Asset managers can uphold their commitment to democracy by supporting greater disclosure and holding accountable board members who have failed to adequately oversee responsible political spending,” said **Tobias Read**, State Treasurer of Oregon.

The letter signatories include:

Aaron Omer Ammons	State Universities Retirement System of Illinois*
Henry Beck	Maine State Treasurer
Roger Boudreau	ERSRI
Colleen Davis	Delaware State Treasurer
Michael W. Frerichs**	Illinois State Treasurer
Deborah B. Goldberg	Massachusetts State Treasurer
Vivian Gray	LACERA
David Green	LACERA
Joshua Hall	Connecticut Retirement Plans and Trust Funds
Sharon Hendricks	CalSTRS Trustee
David Huerta	National Industry Pension Fund
Paige Kelly	SEIU Local 4 Benefits Fund

Liz Lee	LACERS
Seth Magaziner	Rhode Island State Treasurer
Theresa McGoldrick	Massachusetts PRIT Fund
Kenneth Munz	NIPF
David Pickus	New England Health Care Employees Pension Fund
Tobias Read	Oregon State Treasurer
Steven Rock	State Universities Retirement System of Illinois
Curtis Rogers	KCPSRS
Ramon Rubalcava	CalPERS Board of Administration
Mark Sharwood	National Industry Pension Fund
Theresa Taylor	CalPERS
Carol M. Thomas	Connecticut Retirement Plans and Trust Funds
Verna R. Thompson	MEABF
Antonio A. Vasquez	State Universities Retirement System of Illinois
Mitch Vogel	State Universities Retirement System of Illinois
Betty T. Yee	CalPERS and CalSTRS Trustee
David L. Young	Colorado State Treasurer

*All funds listed for identification purposes only.

**Signatory on letters to Vanguard, Fidelity, and State Street only.

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Majority Action is a nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering shareholders of all sizes to hold corporations and their leadership accountable to high standards of long-term value creation, corporate governance, and social responsibility. www.majorityaction.us

The Service Employees International Union (SEIU) unites 2 million diverse members in the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico. SEIU members working in the healthcare industry, in the public sector and in property services believe in the power of joining together on the job to win higher wages and benefits and to create better communities while fighting for a more just society and an economy that works for all of us, not just corporations and the wealthy. www.seiu.org