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*Minnesota's middle class beats out big business as the winner of the 2013 legislative session for the first time in 10 years*

St. Paul, Minn. – For the first time in a decade, Minnesota's Governor and Legislature passed a budget that supports middle class families and schools, instead of big business and the rich. A reformed tax system requires the ultra-rich to pay their fair share, while also closing corporate tax loopholes businesses spent millions to protect.

"Finally, Minnesota is closing corporate tax loopholes instead of schools," said Carol Nieters, Executive Director of SEIU Local 284 "It's a much better investment for Minnesota's future."

The 2013 budget includes significant investments in education, a top priority for voters and legislators during the Fall 2012 elections in which Democrats picked up enough seats to win the majority in both the House and Senate. Many newly elected legislators ran on strong education platforms. To deliver the needed funding, representatives promised to close corporate tax loopholes and ask every Minnesotan to pay their fair share. Before and after the election, progressive allies worked together to hold lawmakers' feet to the fire.

"I knocked on hundreds of doors and heard similar concerns about our schools and our communities from a lot of people," said Anna Angeles-Farris, a custodian in Lakeville School District and member of SEIU Local 284. "People said it's time for corporations and the rich to pitch in."

The grassroots effort calling for a more fair tax system began years ago as businesses hid profits offshore, CEOs took million dollar bonuses, and the ultra-rich dodged their tax responsibilities. This left Minnesota cutting services, borrowing billions from schools and turning to accounting gimmicks to balance the state budget.

"Robbing from school kids and seniors to protect the rich just wasn't right or fair to working families like mine," said Angeles-Farris. "So I got up and did something about it. And now, I can see that it made a huge difference."

Almost exactly a year ago, on May 21st, 2012, 1,000 people packed the Capitol asking for a fair budget. In July, groups protested again at the Capitol against the cuts to schools and seniors while banks and corporations dodged taxes. In September, former U.S. Secretary of Labor Robert Reich spoke to activists about the grassroots effort needed to instigate change. Then, Minnesota elected numerous representatives that agreed with their continuing fight. This spring, activists lobbied, held rallies, wrote letters, and continued working all the way until the last week of the session urging legislators to create a fair tax system that supports the middle class.

"In a week where Minnesota celebrated equality, lawmakers showed that economic equality is important too," said Nieters. "It's the right direction for Minnesota."