



SERVICE EMPLOYEES
INTERNATIONAL UNION
AFL-CIO, CLC

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3/7/2006

Labor Committee Bill No. 464

**AN ACT CONCERNING NOTIFICATION TO EMPLOYERS
OF CHANGES IN THE STANDARD WAGE**

Written Statement of Art Perry

CT Political Director SEIU Local 32BJ-aka "Justice for Janitors"

Thank you, Senator Praque and Representative Ryan and members of the Labor Committee. On behalf of the members of The Service Employees International Union Local 32BJ also known as Justice for Janitors I write today in support of SB-464 An Act Concerning Notification To Employers Of Changes In The Standard Wage. We support this bill because workers under private contracts for State services that pay the Standard Wage have suffered and continue to suffer financial hardships due to the delays of pay increases caused by the current lack of a notice to employers whenever the Commissioner of Labor orders wage increases.

In July 2000 this Legislature enacted the Standard Wage Act which dictates that¹ the wages paid on an hourly basis to any employee of a required employer in the provision of food, building, property or equipment services provided to the state pursuant to a contract or agreement with the state or any state agent, shall be at a rate not less than the standard rate determined by the Labor Commissioner pursuant to subsection (g) of this section.

Section (g) states that² the Labor Commissioner shall, in accordance with subsection (e) of this section, determine the standard rate of wages for each classification on an hourly basis where any covered services are to be provided, and the state agent empowered to let such contract shall contact the Labor Commissioner at least ten days prior to the date such contract will be advertised for bid, to ascertain the standard rate of wages and shall include the standard rate of wages on an hourly basis for all classifications of employment in the proposal for the contract. The standard rate of wages on an hourly basis shall, at all times, be considered the minimum rate for the classification for which it was established.

Sec (e) states that,³ for the purpose of predetermining the standard rate of covered wages on an hourly basis, the Labor Commissioner shall establish classifications for all hourly nonsupervisory employees based on the applicable occupation codes and titles set

¹ From Sec. 31-57f

² From Sec. 31-57f

³ From Sec. 31-57f

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forth in the federal Register of Wage Determinations under the Service Contract Act of 1965, 41 USC 351, et seq. The Labor Commissioner shall then determine the standard rate of wages for each classification of hourly nonsupervisory employees which shall be equivalent to the minimum hourly wages set forth in the federal Register of Wage Determinations under the Service Contract Act, plus a thirty per cent surcharge to cover the cost of any health, welfare and retirement plans or, if no such plan is in effect between the employees and the employer, an amount equal to thirty per cent of the hourly wage which shall be paid directly to the employees.

The problem with the current language is that it does not authorize the Commissioner of Labor to give notice of changes to the rate to employers in instances other than ⁴“at least ten days prior to the date such contract will be advertised for bid”. The Commissioner has the authority and has authorized pay increases from time to time in accordance with changes in the federal Register of Wage Determinations under the Service Contract Act but the employers are not notified of these changes if the contract is not being put to bid. Service contract workers have to wait long periods of time for these wage increases because neither their employers nor the State agency receiving services are aware of the wage changes. **For instance, In Oct. 2003 the Standard Wage was increased for janitors that clean the University of Ct, yet as we sit here today the janitors have not received their back wage payments.** This is a systematic problem, UCONN is not the only State Agency that owes back wages to the contracted employees but the fact that the UCONN janitors are owed \$1.8 million dollars in back pay is a compelling illustration of the problem that this proposed legislation would address. Any pay that a janitor has worked for should be paid to him/her in a timely manner, unfortunately the law as its written fails to accomplish that.

We have heard from State Agencies asking when are we going to fix this because they too see this as a problem. CT should be ashamed that the Dept. of Labor has not done anything to fix this problem, and we assume that the CT DOL will be against this bill because they'll have to do more work to find out who the employers are that have contracts that this needed change will apply to. We acknowledge that the Ct DOL is understaffed so maybe the Dept. of Administrative Services could help them, but someone needs to ensure that the State and State contractors pay the workers in a timely manner. Thank you for your consideration of this important bill.

⁴ From Sec. 31-57f