

Testimony in support of Raised Bill No. 548
An Act concerning the Award of Workers' Compensation
For Scarring and Disfigurement

Joseph Tatroe

My name is Joseph Tatroe. I have worked as a lead auto body man at a body shop in Norwalk for more than thirty years.

On June 1, 1996, while working at the shop, I went to the aid of a co-worker, who was holding a rag that appeared to be on fire. There was a vapor trail that led from the flame to a five-gallon pail. As I grabbed the pail and threw it, it blew up. The force of the impact lifted my body into the air and onto the driveway in front of the garage. The flames followed me as I rolled down the driveway and I was badly burned.

I was rushed to the Burn Unit at Bridgeport Hospital where I was treated for two months. As a result of this work injury, I suffered second, third and fourth degree burns over approximately 65% of my body. I have undergone about 20 skin grafts and 5 plastic surgery procedures.

Because so much of my body was burned, I cannot sweat properly. As a result, in hot weather my body literally overheats as I am unable to get rid of the heat within my body. I also have a lot of difficulty breathing.

I filed a workers' compensation claim for my injuries. The insurance carrier paid for my medical treatment and for the time that I lost from work. I also received an award of 20 weeks of benefits for the permanent scarring to my face and neck. I was not able to receive any compensation benefits for the permanent scarring that I suffered to my hands, arms, legs, back and abdomen, however, because of the limitations imposed by C.G.S. Sec. 31-308(c).

The present law is arbitrary and unfair to individuals like me who suffer permanent significant scarring or disfigurement to areas of the body other than the face, head or neck. Raised Bill No. 548 would help to correct that inequity in appropriate cases and I would urge the Legislature to pass it.