



Testimony of
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Government Administration and Elections Committee
Public Hearing – March 16, 2007

S.B. 43 An Act Concerning the Revocation of State Pensions for State Employees and Public Officials Convicted of Crimes Relating to State Service

S.B. 1183 An Act Concerning The Pensions of State Employees or Public Officials Convicted of Fraud or Corruption

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The Connecticut Employees Union Independent, SEIU Local 511 represents more than six thousand active and retired state employees. We are opposed to S.B. 43 and S.B. 1183, legislation that would revoke pension benefits from state employees convicted of fraud or corruption.

The corruption and fraud committed by members of the Rowland administration was devastating to our state. We all were betrayed by those elected and appointed to serve us. Today, we find ourselves more determined than ever to root out corruption and fraud in state government. While CEUI applauds those efforts, S.B. 43 and S.B. 1183 do not accomplish what we understand to be their intended goals.

The most proven way to eliminate corruption is to provide meaningful protections for whistleblowers. These bills give no protection to a public official or employee who comes forward with information about wrong doing on the job. There is a good chance that their own peripheral involvement in a prohibited activity could cost them their pension. Why on Earth would a state employee come forward with information that would be detrimental to his own well being? These bills give employees an excuse to turn a blind eye to illegal behavior on the job. That is not an effective deterrent to fraud and corruption.

S.B. 43 and S.B. 1183 also violate dozens of collective bargaining agreements brokered between the state and its unionized employees. These agreements are legally binding documents that protect the rights of vested employees. Pension benefits do not belong to the employer, but are deferred compensation earned by the employee. The state cannot take what does not belong to it.



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Private sector employees convicted of fraud or corruption would not suffer the same penalties that proposed in this legislation, nor would employees who have not yet vested in the state pension. If a vested employee and a non-vested employee commit the same crime, they would receive greatly disparate penalties if these bills were enacted.

I urge you not to pass legislation that would violate the contracts between the state and its employees. Instead, I ask the General Assembly to strengthen protections for whistleblowers and if you deem necessary, enact stronger criminal penalties for convicted employees.