

Good Afternoon Members of the Committee,

My name is Robert E. Lee and I have been an employee of SNET-AT&T for 22 years. I am also an injured worker. I am here today to address a Senate Bill pending approval by this committee, SB No. 171. On this issue I can only relate my experience in this matter. In August of 1989, I suffered a work related injury to my lower back which required surgery , resulting in a 35% disability . I have been under the care of the same physician since that time and see him at least every six months for chronic lower back pain. This case has been managed by Helmsman Management Services. In March of 2006, I suffered a knee injury when falling on ice while at work, resulting in two reconstructive surgeries to repair the damage. This case is being managed by Sedgwick Management Services. During the course of my recovery, my back again went out. In September of 2006, after seeing my physician, he ordered an MRI and injection therapy for my back, a treatment that was done and paid for by Helmsman in 2004. Helmsman now denies the claim, saying because of the knee injury the back injury is a new injury, and now belongs to Sedgwick. Sedgwick also denies the claim, saying it belongs to Helmsman. From September to December of 2006, my doctor's office, myself, and my union representatives from CWA Local 1298 tried in vain to get Helmsman to issue a form 43, Denial of Liability, so I could get treatment under my personal insurance. It took 3 months, an informal hearing with Workers Compensation Commissioner Vargas, and a call to Helmsman's attorney to get this form. An MRI was performed in December and my physician again recommended injection therapy. A letter from my physician and the results of the MRI showed no new

injury, just the continued deterioration of my back due to the first injury. Helmsman now wants an Independent Medical Evaluation to determine if the injury is related to the knee. When we, myself and my union's liaison, asked them for a time frame for the IME, we were told 30 to 60 days. As you can plainly see, this is resulting in approximately 5 months of delay for the treatment of my injury. As AT&T is self-insured I honestly don't know why either of these providers is haggling over this matter. This bill would help end these delays by imposing penalties, and I respectfully ask you to pass this legislation.

Secondly I would like to address Senate Bill No. 5697. As you can plainly see by my commentary on S.B. No.171 I have had problems getting medical treatment. Not only do I ask the legislature to pass this bill, I would also ask the legislature to impose attorney's fees and penalties for undue delay of medical treatment. Having to endure months of pain without an end in sight while a clerk in an insurance providers office holds up treatment is likened to cruel and unusual punishment.

Finally, I would also like to address Senate Bills Nos.403 and 1037. I believe these two bills go hand in hand. First I will address bill # 1037. After filing for an informal hearing with the Workers Compensation Commission you can expect a 6 to 8 week delay before a hearing date. If you are not receiving benefits, this undue delay can be a financial hardship on most if not all injured workers, not to mention the emotional stress it can put them under. Once you do reach the hearing, you may have to endure more

than 1 hearing to get the issue resolved, bringing into play bill # 403. As the commissioners are moderators between the injured worker and the employer, any decision made by these commissioners should be binding and they should be able to make a decision based on the information presented at these hearings. If any party is asked to present medical documentation, and a second hearing is needed, a short span of time between should be imposed. Currently the wait for hearings is about 1 month. As you can plainly see, this can result in a delay of 10 to 12 weeks, sometimes without medical treatment or wage replacement. I would respectfully request that you, the commission, impose time limits to shorten these delays and get aid to the people that require it.

In closing, please keep in mind that while these insurance companies and employers play this waiting game with these injured workers, there is a person who is being needlessly caused to suffer for the bottom line of a company. I thank you for giving me this chance to speak.

Robert E. Lee  
79 Kingswood Lane  
Wolcott, ct. 06716  
203-879-7140