CONNECTICUT AFL-CIO

56 Town Line Road, Rocky Hill, CT 06067
860-571-6191 fax: 860-571-6190

Testimony of Lori J. Pelletier, Secretary-Treasurer, Connecticut AFL-CIO before the Labor and Public Employees Committee

January 30, 2007

Good Afternoon Senator Prague, Representative Ryan and the Members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. I am Lori Pelletier and I serve as Secretary-Treasurer of the Connecticut AFL-CIO. I am here on behalf of our 900 affiliated local unions from all across this great state who represent 211,000 working men and women, and I appreciate the invitation to address this committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you this afternoon regarding the bills you have before your committee.

Proposed S.B. No. 151 AN ACT CONCERNING WORKERS' COMPENSATION APPEALS. – We **SUPPORT** this bill. A more efficient and just appeals process is in the best interest of all parties.

Proposed S.B. No. 152 AN ACT CONCERNING ACCIDENTAL FAILURE OF WORKERS' COMPENSATION CLAIMS. We **SUPPORT** this bill.

Proposed S.B. No. 153 AN ACT CONCERNING SCARRING AWARDS UNDER THE WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT. – We **SUPPORT** this bill.

Proposed S.B. No. 171 AN ACT ALLOWING AN ADDITIONAL WORKERS' COMPENSATION AWARD FOR AN EMPLOYER'S OR INSURER'S UNDUE DELAY OR UNREASONABLE CONTEST OF LIABILITY. – We **SUPPORT** this bill.

Proposed S.B. No. 172 AN ACT REQUIRING WORKERS' COMPENSATION RESPONDENTS TO REQUEST HEARINGS TO ASSURE THAT CLAIMANTS ARE RECEIVING BENEFITS. – We **SUPPORT** this bill.

Proposed S.B. No. 399 AN ACT CONCERNING DELAYS BY INSURERS IN PAYING WORKERS' COMPENSATION CLAIMS. – We **SUPPORT** this bill.

Proposed S.B. No. 400 AN ACT CONCERNING DEPENDENTS OF DECEASED WORKERS' COMPENSATION CLAIMANTS. – We **SUPPORT** this bill.

Proposed S.B. No. 401 AN ACT IMPOSING A LATE PAYMENT FEE ON SELF-INSURED EMPLOYERS THAT DELAY WORKERS' COMPENSATION PAYMENTS. – We **SUPPORT** this bill.

PRESIDENT
John W. Olsen

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
Salvatore Luciano

SECRETARY-TREASURER
Lori J. Pelletier

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
Leo Canty

GENERAL VICE PRESIDENT
Brian Petronella

VICE PRESIDENTS
John A. Altieri
Linda Armstrong
Tammie Botelho
Thomas Bruenn
Peggy Buchanan
Wayne J. Burgess
Peter S. Carozza, Jr.
Everett Corey
Ben Cozzi
Dik Days
Kenneth DelaCruz
John Dirzius
Mark Espinosa
Bill Henderson
James Howell
Clarke King
Elizabeth Kuehnel
Thomas Ledoux
Mike Livingstone
Dwight Loines
Kevin Lynch
Steve Matthews
John McCarthy
Jeff Merrow
Jean Morningstar
Charles Page
Sharon M. Palmer
Steven Perruccio
Michael Petosa
Ronald Petronella
Robert Proto
Carmen Reyes
Robert Santo
Edward Sasso
Ray Soucy
Paul Wallace
Kurt Westby
Thomas Wilkinson

Proposed S.B. No. 403 AN ACT CONCERNING TIME LIMITS FOR DISPOSITION OF WORKERS' COMPENSATION CLAIMS. – We **SUPPORT** this bill.

S.B. No. 845 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING LIGHT DUTY WORK UNDER THE WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT. – We **SUPPORT** this bill.

S.B. No. 846 (RAISED) AN ACT REQUIRING EMPLOYERS TO ASSIST INJURED EMPLOYEES IN FILING A CLAIM FOR WORKERS' COMPENSATION. – We **SUPPORT** this bill.

S.B. No. 847 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING ADDITIONAL BENEFITS FOR WAGE LOSS UNDER THE WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT. We **SUPPORT** this bill. The extension of benefits provided under this bill would be limited to a select few special circumstances determined at the discretion of the commissioner.

S.B. No. 1036 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING NOTIFICATION TO INJURED EMPLOYEES OF THE DISCONTINUATION OR REDUCTION OF WORKERS' COMPENSATION BENEFITS. – We **SUPPORT** this bill. An injury suffered by a worker is a stressful experience. Concerns over physical health and future employability are compounded by the everyday stress brought on by diminished income. This bill would leave nothing to chance when notifying injured workers of secession of benefits in such stressful circumstances.

S.B. No. 1037 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING UNREASONABLE DELAYS OF WORKERS' COMPENSATION HEARINGS. We **SUPPORT** this bill. The intent of the Workers' Compensation statutes was to provide for expeditious settlements of claims. Unreasonable delays in this process should result in penalties sufficient enough as to compel statutory compliance.

Proposed H.B. No. 5697 AN ACT CONCERNING MEDICAL TREATMENT DECISIONS OF WORKERS' COMPENSATION COMMISSIONERS. – We are **OPPOSED** to this bill. We believe that this issue is being addressed by other bills before your committee. Further, in the instance where a decision was made at an informal hearing, we believe that this bill would preclude a workers' right to a formal or board hearing.

Proposed H.B. No. 6676 AN ACT REDUCING THE COST OF PREMIUMS FOR WORKERS' COMPENSATION INSURANCE. – We are **OPPOSED** to this bill. The Workers' Compensation laws were enacted to protect injured workers, not compound their physical injury with a monetary injury.

H.B. No. 6956 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING WORKERS' COMPENSATION COVERAGE FOR FIREFIGHTERS AND POLICE OFFICERS. – We **SUPPORT** this bill. This bill would provide for the same level of Heart and Hypertension protection to police and career fire fighters hired after July 1, 1996 as is provided to volunteer fire fighters and pre-1996 employees. These employees experience no less of a threat to their health than any covered employees and it is only fair that they are afforded the same benefit.

By the nature of their jobs, police officers, firefighters and emergency medical technicians must put victims' safety and health before their own. All police officers, firefighters and emergency medical technicians respond to emergency incidents where blood and other bodily fluids are present and uncontrolled. Exposure to such diseases as hepatitis, meningococcal meningitis or tuberculosis, should be presumed exposed in the course of their employment.

This bill would also establish a rebuttable presumption and coverage for certain types of cancer for fire fighters. It is commonly know that fire fighters are exposed to many carcinogenic materials during the course of their employment. Certain types of cancer are specific to these types of exposures and should be compensable under the Workers' Compensation statutes.

H.B. No. 6959 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING WORKERS' COMPENSATION REHABILITATION COUNSELORS. – We **SUPPORT** this bill.