

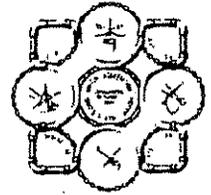
LOCAL UNION 676 U.A.

SPRINKLER FITTERS and APPRENTICES OF CONNECTICUT, RHODE ISLAND & WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS

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TESTIMONY of DAVID J. WASKOWICZ BEFORE FINANCE, REVENUE and BONDING COMMITTEE

FEBRUARY 23, 2009

Senator Daily, Representative Staples and members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee, my name is David Waskowicz. I am a resident and taxpayer of the State of Connecticut, a byproduct of the apprenticeship system, a licensed journeyman sprinkler fitter and Chairman of the Fire Protection Sprinkler System Work Examining Board for the State of Connecticut, Department of Consumer Protection.

I want to address Senate Bill number 837, "An Act Concerning Various Fees". I understand that the state of Connecticut is in difficult economic times as is the rest of the country. Many of our residents face these same difficult times. The state is looking at a huge deficit and trying to find ways to overcome some of the red ink. Doubling the current fees for occupational licenses, apprentice sponsor and annual registration is one law maker's solution for closing the gap and includes placing the monies into the General Fund under SB 837.

I may shock you with this statement, but I am conditionally not opposed to some increase of these fees. A proposed increase of my occupational license from \$60 to \$120 is quite substantial even in good times. My suggestions or conditions to this committee would be first that the revenue remains with the appropriate department that currently receives them and not into the big black hole known as the "GENERAL FUND". Secondly, if there is an increase in fees, there should not be taxation without representation. The Department of Consumer Protection has just three field investigators to police and enforce licensing for fire protection, electrical, plumbing, heating, cooling, elevators and flat glass work throughout the entire state. These occupations are covered under the occupational licensing requirements of the Department of Consumer Protection and all deal with safety to the consumer. Licensing laws guarantee a measure of competency for the various construction trades. If and when these jobs are being performed by unlicensed people, the consumer is at risk. The state could realize an increase in revenue through better enforcement of existing statutes and regulations. If you want to double anything, then double the number of investigators and you should see a good return on investment.

With regard to the proposed increase in apprentice registration and sponsor fees, some increase may be warranted. I want to remind you that the Governor is not raising tuition at the state universities, so why raise the fees of the "other 4 year degree" program? Currently a sponsor pays an annual fee of \$30 and the charge for the apprentice is \$25. Under the new plan these amounts would double. Whether or not you decide to raise

these fees, the money should remain within the Department of Labor so that that agency may continue to monitor and oversee the great training tool of apprenticeship. Please do not create another entity within state government to attempt to perform the duties that are currently being done by the Department of Labor. Do not send those funds to the general fund. Several years ago these fees were instituted to address another shortfall in the states budget and reinstate lost jobs and services. It has been a success.

In closing, an increase in fees for occupational licensing and apprenticeship is inevitable in these troubled economic times. I ask that you raise them accordingly and with some consistency. Please do not send those monies to the same place the lottery money has ended up, the general fund. Render unto the departments what are the departments to allow them to function efficiently. I seem to recall a statement back in 1973 or 1974 that the lottery money would go towards the education budget. Where is that that money from the various games of chance the state of Connecticut offers ending up in 2009?

Thank you for your time and your consideration in these matters.

David J. Waskowicz