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February 24, 2009

Honorable Members of the Labor Committee
Legislative Office Building
Harford, CT 06106

Re: Small Business Opposition to SB-365, An Act Concerning Captive Audience Meetings

Dear Committee Members:

My name is Rick Willard. I volunteer to serve as Chairman of the Connecticut Leadership Council for the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB). I am also the owner of Griswold, Willard & Strong in Wethersfield. Previously I managed our family business, Comstock, Ferre & Co., also in Wethersfield. I have worked for and with small businesses for nearly my entire professional career.

A non-profit, non-partisan organization, NFIB is Connecticut's and the nation's leading small business advocacy group. NFIB's mission is "To promote and protect the *right* of our members to own, operate and grow their businesses." In Connecticut, NFIB represents thousands of small and independent business owners and their workers involved in all types of industries: including manufacturing, retail trade, wholesale trade, transportation, professional services and agriculture. In short, NFIB represents the "Main Street" businesses in every city and town across our state.

Recognizing the vital role that small & independent businesses play in Connecticut's economy, both I and NFIB oppose SB-365, An Act Concerning Captive Audience Meetings.

This measure would ban employers from talking with their employees at regular, required staff meetings about many issues. Some of these issues include:

- developments at the state Capitol on issues affecting the employees' jobs and workplace;
- government contracts; and
- aspects of the employees' health benefits plan.

This bill would deal a devastating blow to the state's business and economic climates by:

- sending a clear message that Connecticut is not a business-friendly state;
- banning grassroots campaigns; and
- promoting confusion in the workplace over the communication of matters important to every employee, such as proposed legislation, and terms and conditions of employment.

The National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) was created in 1935 in large part because Congress wanted to provide an administrative mechanism to ensure balance in the workplace. Under the NLRA employees already have ironclad workplace protections and the Connecticut Fair Employment Policies Act restricts how employers can communicate with their employees.

For all of these reasons, we do not believe that SB-365 is necessary.

Small businesses in Connecticut are responsible for creating over 90% of all new jobs in Connecticut during the last ten years. Unfortunately, the state has also witnessed a record number of small businesses closing their doors. While this can be attributed to a variety of economic woes, passage of this measure will reinforce the notion that Connecticut is an unfriendly state to do business.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments, and I ask that you reject SB-365.

Sincerely,

Rick Willard
Chairman
NFIB/Connecticut Leadership Council