



February 10, 2009

**Statement by Paul Filson, Director of Service Employees
International Union (SEIU) Connecticut State Council in support of
Bill 6191 – AN ACT CONCERNING IMPACT STATEMENTS FOR
MAJOR LAYOFFS OR DISMISSALS OF STATE EMPLOYEES –
Before the Labor and Public Employees Committee.**

CONNECTICUT
STATE COUNCIL

TECHNICAL EMPLOYEES
AND PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEES
INTERNATIONAL UNION

Good Afternoon, Co-Chairs, Senator Prague, Representative Ryan

and distinguished members of the Labor and Public Employees

Committee - I appreciate the opportunity to be here before you today. My

name is Paul Filson and I am Director of SEIU's Connecticut State

Council. The State Council represents over 53,000 members including

13,000 active retired members in Connecticut. SEIU is Connecticut's

largest union. We are the largest health care union, building service

union, and we represent the most state employees. SEIU also represents

police officers, municipal workers, bus drivers and community college

professors and staff. The State Council coordinates the political activity

for SEIU in Connecticut.

Bill No. 6191 increases accountability and helps to prevent ill
considered cuts to essential services. The General Assembly debates and
considers legislation every year that creates services that the citizens of
Connecticut demand. Services have been created to help the poor with
their health care and even their very survival – housing needs for example.

Other services maintain and improve the quality of life for everyone in
Connecticut – such as parks and recreation. Environmental services are
essential to maintain air and water quality standards. The General

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Assembly must vote on creation and expansion of services. Similarly, the General Assembly votes on funding for reducing, consolidating and streamlining services. Yet, a problem exists when nearly all of the administration of legislated services is left entirely up to the executive branch.

Consideration and debate about reduction of services should not be all about immediate dollars and cents. When State expenditures must be reduced due to revenue shortfalls there should be reasoned debate about the effect of cutting spending in areas that directly affect the citizens of Connecticut. During much of the debate about the past budget shortfalls I have heard little about what the impact would be in the long term due to various cuts. Does cutting health care expenditures and services result in short term savings, but long term higher costs due to a generally more unhealthy population?

Layoffs of State employees mean a reduction in services. Not only that, but long term layoffs of productive working and middle class workers can result in higher costs down the road due to more strain on economic and social safety net programs. Blindly reducing services and programs can also be extremely shortsighted. For example, in past cut backs, tax collectors, who earn less than \$75,000 including all benefits, were laid off who annually bring in nearly \$1 million to Connecticut in lost revenues.

Bill 6191 does not prevent service cutbacks. What it does is provide a mechanism, through impact statements, for thoughtful restructuring of government during hard economic times. It will force an analysis and will prevent cut backs of the least resistance, or cut backs of convenience, or even cut backs of vengeance. It will allow for considered debate in the General Assembly and decisions that will result in the greatest benefits for the greatest numbers of Connecticut's residents.