PUBLIC HEARING TESTIMONY
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE – FEBRUARY 24, 2011
RE: HB 6380 – AAC THE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2013

SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT OF LABOR BUDGET – TRANSFER OF APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING PROGRAM FROM DOL TO DECD.

Presented by: Joyce A. Wojtas, Lobbyist
Mechanical Contractors Association of CT & UA Plumbers/Pipefitters Local 777

The Mechanical Contractors Association of CT and Local 777 strongly oppose the transfer of the apprenticeship training program from the Department of Labor to the Department of Economic and Community Development.

For some strange reason, the Apprenticeship Training Program, which is probably one of the most successful job training programs in the State of Connecticut, has been repeatedly attacked by administrative bean counters who have looked at it as a cash cow and are now looking at it as some sort of step child that can be moved around on the checkerboard that is referred to as reorganization of government.

Over the years, this program has put thousands of young men and women to work in construction and other trades that have provided the training facilities/site at no cost to the state. Although there often appears to be a cost associated with this program, it is only because the state continuously confiscates the fees that are paid by both the apprentices and the employers who hire and train them. If these fees were left alone, the program would be self sufficient and would probably have a surplus.

The program is administered in compliance with the U.S. Department of Labor rules and regulations and belongs in Connecticut's Department of Labor as is the case in the majority of other states. Federal grants are often available from the USDOL. What does the Economic Development Department know about this worthwhile job creation program? They appear to have a difficult time understanding what their own mission is in view of the fact that the state continues to lose jobs at a pace that cannot be matched by any other state.

Please accept my apologies if I sound resentful, but there is no justifiable reason that we have to keep defending the existence of this program year after year for one reason or another. I believe that the annual battering of this program that is run efficiently and effectively by dedicated staff in the DOL is a slap in the face to the trades that have worked so hard to raise the bar for the men and women who make a choice to enter these important fields. The construction trades have been a big stepping stone for a greater America.

Pick on some other educational programs for a while. What about the problems with our primary and secondary educational systems when students have to take remedial reading classes before they can enter college. Or what about all those students graduating from college with a degree who can't even get jobs.

Leave the APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING PROGRAM alone. AT LEAST IT WORKS!!!!!!!!!!

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