

**PUBLIC HEARING TESTIMONY**

**GENERAL LAW COMMITTEE -THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2011**

**RE: S.B. 946 AN ACT CONCERNING THE ENFORCEMENT OF OCCUPATIONAL LICENSING LAWS.**

**Presented by: Joyce A. Wojtas, Lobbyist for the Mechanical Contractors Association of CT (MCAC) and UA Plumbers & Pipefitters Union Local 777**

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MCAC and Local 777 strongly support SB 946 and respectfully request the General Law Committee's favorable action on this bill.

Currently, there are approximately **45,000 licensed plumbers, pipefitters, electricians, etc. who pay approximately \$5.5 million in license fees to the state annually.** These licensed individuals have completed a four or five-year apprenticeship required for their trade, passed a state-authorized test, obtained a license, renew the license annually, and comply with the licensing laws of the state.

MCAC and Local 777 believe that with hard economic times there has been a **dramatic increase in violations of licensing laws** as more and more unscrupulous individuals perform work without the appropriate training or licenses. The Department of Consumer Protection (DCP) only has three (3) inspectors on staff for enforcement of all occupational licensing laws due to budget cuts and hiring freezes for a number of years. With the limited staff, it is physically impossible for DCP to adequately enforce the licensing laws, investigate the hundreds of complaints filed by consumers and others against various contractors and trades people, and prepare necessary reports and documents to prosecute violators.

MCAC and Local 777 and others have repeatedly asked for more inspectors. Although we recognize the state's budget problems, we sincerely believe that a plan can be developed by the Commissioner and the Licensing Boards that would have positive results, increase inspectors and produce increased revenue to the DCP Enforcement Fund.

This is a very serious problem and the law breakers know that Connecticut is fair game. Let's not wait for a tragedy to strike to react. Again, I want to emphasize DCP does a great job with limited staff, but more has to be done to stop the violators. In many cases, the violations are criminal offenses and seriously jeopardize the safety of the public. Often times contractors who hire unlicensed persons to perform this work are more than likely cheating the state in many other ways by:

Neglecting to pay unemployment compensation taxes.

Neglecting to provide workers' compensation coverage.

Neglecting to pay business taxes that legitimate businesses pay.

Also, unlicensed individuals do not pay license fees and some do not pay appropriate income taxes.

**The legitimate business person has a hard time competing with this illegal activity.**

Thank you for your consideration of SB 946.

**For additional information contact:**

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