

Testimony –Raised Bill 5460

Labor and Public Employees Committee - February 1, 2011

My name is Brian Anderson. I am a legislative representative for Council 4 AFSCME, a union of 35,000 Connecticut public and private employee members.

Council 4 supports Raised Bill 5460, AAC Captive Audience Meetings. This bill would simply allow workers to opt out from attending a meeting where an employer intends to discuss religion, politics or labor organizing. Similar to the belief that it is not an employer's right to coerce an employee into choosing whether to unionize or not.

Currently, employers often force workers into one on one, or one on several, meetings with the employer and professional union busting consultants in order to thwart worker attempts to unionize. Such meetings are used to intimidate and harass workers. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 23, section 4) states that "Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests." Our country not only signed this declaration, but was a prime drafter of it. Captive audience meetings surely violate this declaration of the basic rights that every human being is entitled to. National opinion polls show that well over 60% of U.S. workers want to be part of a union, yet only 11% are unionized. This shows the need for this bill.

The Connecticut Business and Industry Association (CBIA) and oppressive employers have killed this bill before, arguing that it is pre-empted by federal law. Yet, Fred Feinstein, the former General Counsel of the National Labor Relations Board, argues that federal law would not preempt this bill, stating that "the proposed legislation extends certain privacy protections to the workplace and state laws establishing workplace privacy rights have withstood preemption challengers in the past."

Passing the Captive Audience bill would help strengthen the middle class over night and would not cost a dime of taxpayer money.