



Testimony
Elizabeth Gara
Connecticut Water Works Association (CWWA)
Before the
Labor Committee
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The Connecticut Water Works Association (CWWA) opposes **HB-5460**, which undermines the ability of employers to discuss a wide range of issues with their employees.

Water companies are highly regulated industries. Operations which are critical to providing a safe supply of quality water are subject to extensive local, state and federal laws and regulations, including compliance with water quality standards, emergency preparedness, the preparation and submission of water supply plans, ratemaking issues, the installation of mains and treatment facilities, etc. In order to ensure compliance with these laws – which are critical to ensuring the public health and safety of the communities we serve – we must communicate with employees on a regular basis.

We also rely on our employees as experts in the field to help us provide input to policymakers on laws and regulations affecting the delivery of public water supplies. There are numerous regulatory issues pending before various state and federal agencies that may have a significant impact on water company operations and the delivery and quality of public water supplies. As employers, we need to obtain feedback from employees at various levels in the organization to determine how these proposed changes may affect our customers.

Under HB-5460, these issues would be considered political in nature and we would be prohibited from discussing them with employees or requiring their feedback. This prohibition on vital communication would come at the expense of our employees, who have a tremendous stake in understanding how these policies may impact their particular job, and our customers, who depend on a safe supply of quality water for public health and safety.

Recognizing this, the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), outlines how employers may communicate with their employees. Regarding employer speech, section 8(c) of the NLRA states: “The expressing of any views, argument, or opinion, or the dissemination thereof, whether in written, printed, graphic, or visual form, shall not constitute or be evidence of an unfair labor practice under any of the provisions of this act, if such expression contains no threat of reprisal or force or promise of benefit.” Accordingly, the NLRA struck down a Wisconsin captive audience law because it violated an employer’s free speech rights.

For these reasons, we **urge you to reject HB-5460**.

The Connecticut Water Works Association, Inc. (CWWA) is an association of public water supply utilities serving more than 500,000 customers, or population of about 2½ million people, located throughout Connecticut. Membership in the Association is open to all Connecticut water utilities: investor-owned, municipal and regional authorities. CWWA is committed to working with the state to develop policies that will ensure that Connecticut has a safe, ample supply of water to meet present and future needs.