



**LABOR AND PUBLIC EMPLOYEES COMMITTEE**

**March 10, 2011**

**Leo Canty**

Good afternoon Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski and members of the committee. I am Leo Canty, Vice-President of AFT Connecticut. Our union represents over 29,000 educators, health professionals and public service workers all over Connecticut. Our contracts are negotiated under private sector, and public sector rules including those for teachers, municipal and state employees.

Thanks for allowing me yet another opportunity to engage in one of the perennial rites of spring. As the robins begin to chirp, the crocuses and daffodils begin to bloom, the snow melts as the days get longer and warmer we all get to talk about changing binding arbitration and prevailing wages.

Every year the robins have different tweets, the colors of the blooms will change and the depth of snow to melt is varied – this year’s piles have a way to go. Along with the usual natural signs of seasonal change, we can always count on some springing diversity in the offerings for changes of the laws that are as founded and true as nature.

This year we have:

1. **S.B. No. 989 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING RESERVE FUND BALANCES AND CHANGES TO MUNICIPAL BINDING ARBITRATION.**
2. **S.B. No. 990 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE PREVAILING RATE OF WAGES.**
3. **H.B. No. 6409 (RAISED) AN ACT REQUIRING NEUTRAL MUNICIPAL ARBITRATORS BE MEMBERS OF THE AMERICAN ARBITRATION ASSOCIATION.**

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As a final comment – let me suggest that the towns that are flush with cash and guarding their reserves might want to actually think about investing some of those funds in capital projects where they can save more than they might be getting on low rates of return on dividends on those accounts. Right now the market on prevailing rates is very low – you have as much as a 20-30% discount on construction in this environment where everyone is looking for work to do - as the economy picks up, so will market rates and profits for contractors. Bond rates are very low now and those rates won't last either. And add this bonus to that - doing construction now puts people to work in a time we need any jobs we can find to get the economy back into action.

It makes more sense to me to do some smarter, deeper planning and investing rather than wasting time and energy chasing these law-changing spring rituals that for good reasons, always end up the same.

Thanks you for this time – and enjoy the longer days that start next week – that is if you can ever get out of these windowless hearing rooms long enough to hear the birds and smell the flowers.