

SENATE BILL 418
HOUSE BILL 6110
HOUSE BILL 6268
HOUSE BILL 6295

TESTIMONY OF JEFFREY MATCHETT
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AFSCME, COUNCIL 15

BEFORE THE PUBLIC SAFETY AND SECURITY COMMITTEE OF
THE CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY

FEBRUARY 15, 2011

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Committee, my name is Jeffrey Matchett and I am Executive Director with AFSCME Council 15, a labor union representing the interests of more than 4000 police officers in 62 municipal communities throughout Connecticut.

I am here today to speak in favor of the following bills before this Committee:

418 – AN ACT CONCERNING RECERTIFICATION OF RETIRED POLICE OFFICERS. – This bill would allow retired police officers to retain their police certifications, provided that they meet the requirements for re-certification, and pay the cost of re-certification. Currently, re-certification requires a sponsoring police agency. However, this bill will allow police officers to retain certification without a sponsoring agency, provided they have retired from a Connecticut department. It makes sense because it will provide retirees with the opportunity to return to police work at a department which may seek a seasoned veteran officer, and which does not choose to pay the cost of training a recruit, which can cost \$50,000 per officer. It will make our communities safer, and give employment opportunities to many of our police officers who remain capable of performing the job in communities which could use their skills and experience.

6295 – AN ACT CONCERNING LATERAL TRANSFERS OF POLICE OFFICERS. – This bill is similar to SB 418 in that it makes movement of trained and certified police officers between departments more available. Currently, POST requires that officers who seek to move laterally to an entry-level position, pass all of the entry-level requirements for new recruits, including satisfaction of the physical fitness standards, and passage of a polygraph and psychological exam. This despite the fact that these officers have a POST certification at the time they seek the transfer, and the fact that officers who are certified, have no requirement to pass a physical fitness, psychological, or polygraph exam in order to maintain certification. This bill will allow more movement among police departments and give municipalities the ability to employ

experienced and seasoned police officers within their police departments without being forced to incur the \$50,000 cost of sending a recruit through the academy process. It makes good sense for police officers, and it makes good sense for municipalities.

6268 – AN ACT IMPOSING A MANDATORY MINIMUM SENTENCE FOR ASSAULT OF PUBLIC SAFETY, EMERGENCY MEDICAL OR PUBLIC TRANSIT PERSONNEL. We support this bill because each day our police officers are sent into the community to enforce the laws and keep our communities safe. And oftentimes, those individuals who make our communities unsafe, take the liberty of assaulting police officers without the threat of severe consequences for doing so. We ask our police officers to do a difficult job which is frequently made more difficult by criminals who have no fear of penalties for assaulting a police officer. A mandatory two-year minimum sentence for these criminals will make our communities safer, and give our police officers a better opportunity to do their jobs safely.

We are opposed to the following bill:

6110 – AN ACT REQUIRING DOUBLED FINES FOR CERTAIN VIOLATIONS IN MUNICIPAL CONSTRUCTION ZONES AND PROHIBITING MUNICIPALITIES FROM REQUIRING POLICE SUPERVISION OF CONSTRUCTION ZONES.

The bill proposes at Section 2 that “No municipality shall require that a police officer supervise traffic at a construction zone on a municipal road, as defined in section 13a-110a of the general statutes.” We are opposed to this provision because it puts the public safety at risk. Police departments are charged with the authority of ensuring the public safety and maintaining the public peace. Police departments are uniquely qualified for assessing and determining when and where police officers may be needed to ensure that the public remains safe at all times. Frequently work zones are places where police officers, trained in traffic direction, and cloaked with the authority to enforce the law and maintain the peace, are needed to ensure the orderly flow of traffic and maintain the safety of those individuals who are placed in harm’s way at work sites. By taking the authority to maintain the public safety at these work sites away from police departments or municipalities, safety at these sites will be placed in the hands of private vendors who are driven by profit motives rather than motives of ensuring public safety. This bill promotes bad policy and places the public safety at risk. We cannot support it, and neither should this committee.