



## State of Connecticut

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Public Hearing Testimony  
February 1, 2011  
Labor & Public Employees Committee  
Kevin Witkos, State Senator, 8<sup>th</sup> District

Re: Senate Bill 97 - An Act Concerning the Denial of Unemployment Benefits to  
Certain Drivers who are Unemployed as a Result of Being Denied a Special  
Operator's Permit

Good morning Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski, Ranking Members Guglielmo and Rigby and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 97 - An Act Concerning the Denial of Unemployment Benefits to Certain Drivers who are Unemployed as a Result of Being Denied a Special Operator's Permit.

Last session, I worked with Senator Prague in crafting legislation that would do what this bill seeks to do. Unfortunately, SB64 did not make its way through the legislative process.

Currently, if you are a worker whose occupation depends on having a driver's license – such as a truck or taxi driver – and your license is suspended, you can apply to have a special operator's permit. Having a special operator's permit allows an individual with a suspended license – subject to certain conditions - to continue driving on the road.

However, the state does not allow individuals who have been convicted of a DUI or who are caught driving with a suspended license to acquire a special operator's permit. If these individuals who are unable to get a special operator's license lose their job, they will nonetheless be eligible for unemployment benefits. What's even more troubling is that the employer will be responsible for paying for these benefits.

What this bill says is that if you are an employer and your employee can no longer work because they could not obtain a special operator's permit, you will not be charged for the benefits and your experience rating will not be affected.

While this bill is a great step forward in helping employers, I would urge the committee to consider amending the bill so that individuals who are unable to obtain a special operators permit because of a DUI be denied unemployment benefits entirely. Last session, this committee voted out unanimously a bill that would do just that.

In closing, I would like to thank the co-chairs for their willingness to raise Senate Bill 97 this session. I sincerely hope that the committee looks favorable on this bill so that it can make its way through the legislative process. Thank you.