



CONNECTICUT AFL-CIO

56 Town Line Road, Rocky Hill, CT 06067

860-571-6191

fax: 860-571-6190

Testimony of Lori Pelletier, Secretary-Treasurer Connecticut AFLCIO
before the Labor and Public Employees committee
February 26, 2013

Senator Osten and Representative Tercyak and members of the committee my name is Lori Pelletier and I am here to testify on behalf of the 900 affiliated local unions of the Connecticut AFLCIO. Before you today are a number of bills which we are here in support of. We appreciate the work of this committee and the opportunity to testify today.

We support the following proposed bills:

Proposed S.B. No. 54 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A RETIREMENT SAVINGS PLAN FOR LOW-INCOME PRIVATE SECTOR WORKERS. (LAB)

Low income workers have the most difficult time trying to save for retirement. We wholeheartedly believe every worker should have a defined benefit pension, the reality is CEO's rarely provide pensions and the only through a collective bargaining agreement will you negotiate one. Senator Looney's bill is an attempt to save these workers money that would be siphoned off in fees by traditional for-profit savings plan by utilizing the low administrative costs and investment strategy available through the state.

S.B. No. 905 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING PORTAL-TO-PORTAL WORKERS' COMPENSATION COVERAGE FOR MUNICIPAL AND STATE POLICE AND FIRE DISPATCHERS. (LAB) When these public servants are called in on the job we should provide for the safety and security of their families by ensuring that if they are injured in the way to work that workers compensation would be an avenue of protection for their family.

S.B. No. 907 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR AN EMPLOYER'S NOTICE TO DISPUTE CERTAIN CARE DEEMED REASONABLE FOR AN EMPLOYEE UNDER THE WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT. (LAB) workers compensation has an awful reputation because of unnecessary delays by employers and their agents when it comes to timely medical decisions and treatment. This bill will eliminate the unnecessary delays

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by putting the burden on the employer to make sure if there are any changes on treatment that the injured worker is notified in a timely manner.

S.B. No. 925 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING WORKERS' COMPENSATION COVERAGE FOR FIREFIGHTERS AND POLICE OFFICERS. (LAB) In 1993 the State made drastic changes to the workers compensation laws. These changes were promised to save employers from increasing rates while further injuring the families of injured workers. Those promises of reduced costs went unfulfilled. So here we are twenty years later and the only take away from those 1993 reforms were that injured workers are still struggling within the system, and workers compensation insurance is one of the most profitable lines of insurance to be sold. This bill corrects a wrong from 1993 and it's time to make sure those workers who run into and not away from dangerous situations are they themselves protected.

We oppose the following bills:

Proposed H.B. No. 5533 AN ACT CONCERNING THE MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEE RETIREMENT SYSTEM CONTRIBUTION RATE. (PD,LAB) The municipal employees retirement fund or MERF is a partnership between cities and their employees who are enrolled. By increasing the amounts from employees only it puts an unfair burden and takes away from the level playing field.

Proposed H.B. No. 5686 AN ACT CONCERNING MINIMUM BASE PERIOD WAGES AND ELIGIBILITY FOR UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS. (LAB) During this latest economic down turn our State's economy would have been much worse if employees who had been laid off had unnecessary and unreasonable hurdles to be able to access unemployment benefits. By increasing the base period wages you are injuring the most vulnerable population in our society.

Proposed H.B. No. 5701 AN ACT CONCERNING MONTHLY REDUCTIONS OF UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION. (LAB) For every four people looking for work there is one job. So to think that workers are happy just sitting at home collecting unemployment is absurd. No family wants to depend on unemployment, but if they are impacted by a layoff it is a safety net and diminishing it because the economy has not turned around enough for more workers to be on the job makes no sense at all.

We support the following bills:

H.B. No. 6416 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING STATE CHARTER SCHOOL EMPLOYEES.
(LAB)

H.B. No. 6417 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING PROBATE COURT EMPLOYEES. (LAB)

Both of these bills clarify existing state law, and in doing so provide these value public assets protections under state law. These are important and necessary clarifications and we appreciate the committee bring up these bills.

As always we are available to answer your questions or concerns and thank the committee for holding this public hearing.