

**Testimony of Win Heimer, Executive Vice President  
Connecticut Alliance for Retired Americans**

**Before the Labor and Public Employees Committee  
Connecticut General Assembly  
Thursday, February 27, 2014**

SENATOR OSTEN, REPRESENTATIVE TERCYAK AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE:

MY NAME IS WIN HEIMER. I AM A RESIDENT OF WEST HARTFORD AND THE EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE CONNECTICUT ALLIANCE FOR RETIRED AMERICANS. THE ALLIANCE IS THE STATE AFFILIATE OF THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR RETIRED AMERICANS AND COMPRISES 50,000 MEMBERS IN CONNECTICUT.

I COME BEFORE YOU TO URGE YOUR SUPPORT FOR SENATE BILL 220 – AN ACT CONCERNING THE INCLUSION OF LABOR HISTORY IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL CURRICULUM.

I BELIEVE IT WAS FORMER UNITED STATES SENATOR JOE LIEBERMAN WHO ONCE SAID THERE ARE TWO THINGS THAT MADE THIS COUNTRY GREAT: PUBLIC EDUCATION AND LABOR UNIONS. THEY BUILT THE MIDDLE CLASS.

BUT HOW MANY OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE KNOW THIS? PRACTICALLY NONE OF THIS GENERATION KNOWS THAT IT WAS THE LABOR MOVEMENT THAT PLAYED A VITAL ROLE IN PROMOTING WORKPLACE SAFETY, THE 40-HOUR 5-DAY WORK WEEK, SOCIAL SECURITY, THE MINIMUM WAGE, AN END TO CHILD LABOR... THE LIST GOES ON AND ON. THESE ARE BENEFITS AND CONDITIONS THAT WE TAKE FOR GRANTED...AND THAT ARE RAPIDLY BEING ERODED.

I'LL BET THAT A LOT OF YOUNG PEOPLE DON'T EVEN KNOW THAT A NATIONAL LAW THAT WAS PASSED DURING THEIR GRANDPARENT'S DAYS AND IS STILL ON THE BOOKS TODAY ALLOWS WORKERS TO COME TOGETHER TO COLLECTIVELY BARGAIN WITH THEIR EMPLOYER OVER WAGES AND WORKING CONDITIONS.

AN IMPORTANT PART OF OUR HISTORY IS BEING LOST. PEOPLE OF MY GENERATION UNDERSTAND THAT REAL BATTLES WERE WAGED FOR THESE ADVANCES AND THAT PEOPLE LITERALLY DIED FOR EXAMPLE TO GAIN AN EIGHT-HOUR WORK DAY. LABOR UNIONS HAVE BEEN A PART OF OUR NATION FROM THE VERY BEGINNING. AFTER ALL, THE FIRST CONTINENTAL CONGRESS MET IN CARPENTERS' HALL IN PHILADELPHIA, A UNION HALL.

GOOD TEACHERS AND GOOD TEACHING MATERIALS CAN EASILY INTEGRATE LABOR STUDIES WITH OTHER SUBJECTS TO MAKE IT RELEVANT TO TODAY'S STUDENTS. PASSAGE OF SENATE BILL 220 CAN MAKE THAT HAPPEN.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION.