



Connecticut Chapter

Testimony by Chris Syrek, President of
Associated Builders & Contractors of Connecticut

Before the Labor and Public Employees Committee February 24, 2015

HB 6246 An Act Concerning Labor Agreements and the Governing Bodies of Municipalities

Good afternoon my name is Chris Syrek President of the Associated Builders and Contractors of Connecticut. We are a trade association representing over 200 members and all of the entire non-union contracting industry here in our state.

I am here to voice our support for HB 6246, an Act Concerning Labor Agreements and the Governing Bodies of Municipalities. This bill would simply require that every municipality considering the use of a Project Labor Agreement (PLA) would need to hold a public hearing to discuss the decision.

Many public construction projects such as schools and government buildings cost anywhere from \$20 million to sometimes over \$100 million. Anytime that much money is spent, it is worth taking a few hours in a public forum, where the tax-paying public has the opportunity to ask questions about the project.

PLAs are a highly controversial topic and usually inspire a heated debate between those that support PLAs and those that oppose them. CT ABC finds that PLAs are written to ensure that union labor receives 100% of the work, and that they discriminate against merit shop contractors. Considering that merit shop contractors make up 80% of the construction industry, when they are left unable to competitively bid the job, it eliminates a large pool of potential bidders. When competition is reduced during the bidding process, this will almost always result in a higher price.

But regardless of where anyone stands on the merits of PLAs, it is impossible not to support a public hearing to discuss whether or not they are in the best interest of the municipality. The fact is that many PLAs are agreed upon without any input from the public, or any discussion and debate. Especially during these tough economic times, when budgets are tight, and every dollar spent is so important, it's worth discussing such a large expenditure at a public meeting.

In conclusion, CT ABC is in complete support of HB 6246. While our association does not support the use of Project Labor Agreements this bill is about something more important. It's about transparency in government, and the ability to show our citizens that their elected officials are making the most educated decision on behalf of the community. Given the large nature of these projects, and the amount of money being spent on them, a public hearing is certainly a discussion worth having.