



Testimony of Ed Leavy  
President, State Vocational Federation of Teachers  
**Report on Fiscal Stability and Economic Growth**  
March 23, 2018

I am Ed Leavy, president of the State Vocational Federation of Teachers. I proudly represent the nearly 1200 educators in our technical school system. I have been part of this system, which has helped provide Connecticut a highly skilled and educated workforce, since 1985. I am here to address the SVFT's concerns with the Financial Stability and Economic Growth Report.

We first have concerns with the scope and power of the committee responsible for the report. This committee, composed entirely of non-elected people, was guaranteed their report would get a full hearing and a floor vote. I'm sure many of our elected leaders would like similar guarantees for their bills. Of all the problems we have in our politics today, the lack of corporate input is not one of them. This committee, however, was entirely composed of corporate interests. The perspective of working people was not overlooked; it was rejected. When asked why no labor people were on the committee, one of the chairmen said they "only wanted to talk to people who made sense," which demonstrates a profound lack of respect for the opinions of working people and the organizations which represent us. Even though the committee was given extraordinarily broad powers, it still managed to exceed them. The committee was not charged with addressing issues regarding collective bargaining, but still made recommendations that would dramatically curtail collective bargaining for State workers. The committee with oversight of collective bargaining, the Labor Committee, is not represented here today. The normal processes of our democratic government are challenged by the manner in which this report was written and issued.

The report itself reflects what happens when only one perspective is considered. Despite the massive Federal tax break to America's wealthiest citizens, the report recommends dramatically cutting the income tax for this group. It also recommends eliminating the estate tax and the gift tax, which goes beyond even the Trump tax cuts. To pay for this, more regressive taxes such as the sales tax are increased. While there are ideas in the report which we do approve – the gradual increase in minimum wage to \$15, a slight increase in corporate tax -- in general, this report promotes the austerity budgets and trickle-down economics which has been tried throughout the country and has succeeded nowhere.

I do not doubt the sincerity or good intentions of the people on this committee. I truly believe these are intelligent people who want to help the state. But Connecticut is a diverse state with one of the largest income disparities in the country. The experiences of the people in Greenwich are not remotely the experiences of the people in our urban areas, but our economy needs to work for everyone. The limited perspective of the people on the committee that led them to believe putting a picture of yachts on the cover of the report also led to some of their proposals. It led them to believe the estate tax is a "nuisance" that hurts Connecticut's economy. As one of our candidates for Treasurer told me, it's the kind of things rich people say when they're in a room together. That is understandable, but it is not appropriate public policy for the public at large.