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3.5.26

Representative Arthur Corvese, Chairman
House Labor Committee
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903
HouseLabor@rilegislature.gov

RE: Support of H-7440 AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- EMPLOYMENT SECURITY -- BENEFITS

Dear Chairman Corvese,

As Business Manager of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local Union 99, I represent over 1000 men and women who provide their skills through our vast network of signatory contractors in the Electrical Industry in the State of Rhode Island and nearby Massachusetts. I also serve as one, if not the only, voice of the men and women who are not yet fortunate enough to be represented by an electrical labor union in the state of Rhode Island.

I am writing to you today in **support of H-7440**

Although IBEW Local 99 has very specific "No Strike and No Lockout" language in our Collective Bargaining Agreement, many are not as fortunate to enjoy that trusting relationship with the employer. In a Union such as ours, both management and labor have a vested interest and closely aligned goals. We not only work collaboratively to improve wages, benefits and working conditions, we are sympathetic to the needs of each other and work as a team to resolve issues in the most expedient ways.

There are many other unions, to no fault of their own, that simply are not provided that type of relationship with management. When contract negotiations become less of a collaboration and more of a cage match, employees are sometimes left with no other choice but to exercise their God given right to withhold their labor. Historically, an often fruitless delay of the inevitable; the employer sometimes will make the unwise, immoral and unethical choice to lock their dedicated staff out on the street and hire those who will slither in and attempt to do the work. This is nothing more than a bully tactic whereas the worker and their family simply can't survive without an income. The employer will always be able to hold their breath longer if there is no ability for those who do the work to collect unemployment benefits. The mere presence of that fact makes it unconscionable that a person who is trying to better for their family is forced to cave to the company's demands or starve. I thought we sort of resolved this treatment of those who do the work the year Babe Ruth hit his final home run, but here we are still dealing with it today.

In conclusion, I can assure you that no person ever wants to go on strike. Even with unemployment benefits, it is incredibly difficult to get by. Any worker who takes to the streets to fight for a better situation has hit their breaking point and should be respected by all who pass judgement upon them. With that, **we support the passage of H-7440** for the reasons stated above.

Sincerely,

Joseph L. Walsh, Jr. / Business Manager
cc: James DeCastro / Committee Clerk
Committee Members
Paul Macdonald / Local 99 Lobbyist
Pat Crowley/Erica Hammond RI AFL-CIO

