

PA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Senate Labor and Industry Committee

**Abraham Amorós – PA Legislative Director
*Laborers' International Union of North America***

TESTIMONY

Senate Bills 820, 821 and 822

October 11, 2011

Good morning, Chairman Gordner, Chairwoman Tartaglione and members of the Senate Labor and Industry Committee.

My name is Abe Amorós and I am the PA Legislative Director of the Laborers' International Union of North America. We represent 30,000 members throughout the commonwealth.

I'd like to start by thanking you for holding this hearing and for allowing the Pennsylvania Laborers to present testimony on Senate Bills 820, 821 and 822.

As you know, the purpose of the Prevailing Wage Act is to protect workers by paying them a fair wage based upon experience and training. By protecting our workers, the Prevailing Wage Act allows skilled craftsmen to work on public works projects.

This not only guarantees that the best possible workers are performing highly-skilled tasks but also protects taxpayers against cost overruns. Through quality craftsmanship on infrastructure – such as highways and bridges – projects not only last longer but are safer to the public, as well.

These skilled workers use their hands and their backs to provide a living for their families. They are the backbone of construction and have successfully built America over the years.

Prevailing Wage is currently paid on all construction work in Pennsylvania whether it's considered "maintenance" or "construction.

Current wage rates guarantee an honest day's pay for an honest day's work.

In 2008, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court upheld a decision by the Commonwealth Court in the Borough of Youngwood versus the Pennsylvania Prevailing Wage Appeals Board.

The Supreme Court ruled that "maintenance work" is defined as a subset of "repair" which is a component of "public work". Therefore, workers doing repair work should be paid fair wages under the Prevailing Wage Act.

Now is not the time to cut wages for Pennsylvanians. With the unemployment rate still at an unacceptable rate throughout the state and the nation, workers cannot afford to take another step backward.

Working families throughout Pennsylvania need everyone's support in finding good-paying, family-sustaining jobs...the kind of jobs that Prevailing Wage allows.

The Laborers want to work cooperatively with business.

I'd like to point out that our Vice President and Regional Manager for the Mid-Atlantic – Dennis Martire....from Pittsburgh – understands this concept all too well. He is

not interested in bashing business, but in looking for common ground to create more jobs for working families throughout Pennsylvania.

We cannot allow Pennsylvania's economy to continue struggling without working together to fix our roads, our crumbling bridges and rebuild our schools.

And while we understand that the threshold has not been increased since 1961, our workers cannot afford to have it raised to \$ 200 thousand dollars. Not only would that impact our projects but it would also suppress our workers' wages.

If anything, we want to create more family-sustaining jobs. Just this month, the Laborers joined the Blue-Green Alliance. The purpose of the Alliance is to create more jobs in the 21st Century that repair our infrastructure, protect the environment, protect the public health of our residents and provide quality, family sustaining jobs.

Last month, the Laborers began talking with legislators from both sides of the aisle in both chambers to create a Blue-Green Caucus. In November, we will formally announce the formation of the Caucus, its members and legislation that combines job creation with smart environmental standards.

We look forward to engaging in a constructive dialogue with members of this committee to create more jobs for working families throughout Pennsylvania.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony to the Senate Labor and Industry Committee.

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