

STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS

M. JODI RELL  
GOVERNOR

July 2, 2009

The Honorable Susan Bysiewicz  
Secretary of the State  
20 Trinity Street  
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Secretary Bysiewicz:

I am returning to you without my signature House Bill 6502, *An Act Concerning the Standard Wage for Certain Connecticut Workers*.

This bill establishes new hourly wage and benefits for certain employees under the standard wage law, including employees of private contractors who do building and property maintenance, property management and food service work in state buildings. As a result, certain employees will receive the same prevailing wage rates and benefits as employees working under the union agreement covering the same type of work for the largest number of hourly nonsupervisory employees in Hartford County.


Connecticut's standard wage law became effective July 1, 2000, and grants the Labor Commissioner the authority to determine wages paid to employees under contracts with the state for food, building and property management services utilizing the wages set forth in the Federal Register of Wage Determinations under the Service Contract Act, plus a 30 percent surcharge to cover the cost of any health, welfare or retirement plan. This process ensures that rates paid for similar work are equal for all state contracts over a certain dollar threshold and employees receive a supplemental allocation for benefits. Prior to this law, most of the private sector employees who cleaned state office buildings were paid minimum wages with no health care, paid sick leave or other benefits. The 2000 law addressed an obvious inequity and has worked well over the last nine years.

This legislation creates an exception to current law and provides varying wages and benefits to certain employees of contractors at a potentially significant cost to the state. The law mandates that a select group of employees will be paid union contract wages and benefits, instead of the Department of Labor's determined standard wage rates, and creates two distinct classes of janitors – those hired before July 1, 2009 and those hired after such date.

By removing the link of certain employees' wages and benefits to the Department of Labor's standard wage rates, we are exposing the State to an unknown and unmanageable level of cost. There will be an entire subset of services whose price will be dictated by privately conducted union negotiations and contracts to which the state is not a party. Both groups of janitors perform the same critical services for the state and therefore should be paid the same wage rates, regardless of when an individual was hired. I cannot sanction wages and benefits that are determined completely outside of the state's control and that have not been included in the budget for the next biennium.

For these aforementioned reasons and pursuant to Section 15 of Article Fourth of the Constitution of the State of Connecticut and Article III of the Amendments to the Constitution of the State of Connecticut, I am returning House Bill 6502 without my signature.

Very truly yours,

  
M. Jodi Rell  
Governor