

Abe Amorós
UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION HEARING
Senate Labor and Industry Committee
8/4/15
Tom Ridge Environmental Center
ERIE, PA

REMARKS

**GOOD MORNING, SENATOR BAKER...SENATOR
TARTAGLIONE AND MEMBERS OF THE SENATE LABOR
AND INDUSTRY COMMITTEE.**

**MY NAME IS ABE AMOROS AND I AM THE
PENNSYLVANIA LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR FOR THE
LABORERS' INTERNATIONAL UNION OF NORTH
AMERICA...ALSO KNOWN AS LIUNA.**

**ON BEHALF OF MORE THAN TWENTY-FIVE
THOUSAND MEMBERS IN PENNSYLVANIA, I BRING YOU
GREETINGS.**

**AS MANY OF YOU KNOW, LIUNA IS A PRIVATE,
BUSINESS-FRIENDLY UNION THAT HAS A DEMONSTRATED
AND SUCCESSFUL TRACK RECORD WITH CONTRACTORS
THROUGHOUT THE COMMONWEALTH OF
PENNSYLVANIA.**

**LIUNA PROVIDES THE VERY BEST IN TERMS OF
SKILLED CRAFTSMANSHIP ON CONSTRUCTION AND
HEAVY HIGHWAY PROJECTS.**

**OUR MEMBERS ARE HIGHLY-TRAINED WORKERS
WHO GET THE JOB DONE...ON TIME...SAFELY – WITH
SOME OF THE BEST TRAINING PROGRAMS IN THE
COUNTRY.**

**TODAY, I AM URGING MEMBERS OF THIS
COMMITTEE TO PROVIDE RELIEF FOR THOUSANDS OF
CONSTRUCTION WORKERS WHO HAVE BEEN**

NEGATIVELY IMPACTED BY ACT 60 OF 2012 WHICH HAVE BEEN COMMONLY REFERRED TO UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES.

AS YOU KNOW, THE BASE YEAR WAGE REQUIREMENT WAS CHANGED TO FORTY-NINE-AND-A-HALF-PERCENT.

THIS HAS PROVIDED A SIGNIFICANT HARDSHIP FOR OUR MEMBERS WHO HAVE STRUGGLED TO MAKE ENDS MEET.

UNDER THE OLD LAW, A CLAIMANT HAD TO HAVE TWENTY PERCENT OF HIS OR HER TOTAL WAGES OUTSIDET OF THE HIGHEST QUARTER IN THE BASE YEAR.

BEFORE ACT 60, THE RATE CAME TO THIRTY SEVEN PERCENT.

ACT 60 ALSO CHANGED THE DEFINITION OF CREDIT WEEK WHICH WAS DEFINED AS A WEEK WHERE THE CLAIMANT EARNED AT LEAST FIFTY DOLLARS OR MORE PRIOR TO ITS ENACTMENT...TODAY, CREDIT WEEK IS DEFINED AS A WEEK WHERE ONE MUST EARN AT LEAST \$100.

SINCE A CLAIMANT MUST HAVE EIGHTEEN CREDIT WEEKS IN A BASE YEAR TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR BENEFITS, THIS CHANGE IN DEFINITION MAKES IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR WORKERS WHO EARN LESS PER WEEK OR WORKING PART TIME TO COLLECT.

UNDER THE PREVIOUS LAW, A MINIMUM WEEKLY BENEFIT – OR WBR – WAS THIRTY FIVE DOLLARS PER WEEK.

UNDER ACT 60, IT DOUBLES TO SEVENTY DOLLARS WEEKLY. THIS MEANS THAT A CLAIMANT MUST HAVE EARNED AT LEAST \$3,931 DURING THE PAST YEAR, COMPARED TO \$1,320 UNDER THE PREVIOUS ACT, TO POTENTIALLY QUALIFY.

A CONSTRUCTION WORKER MUST NOW HAVE A MINIMUM OF 18 CREDIT WEEKS...AS OPPOSED TO 16...MAKING IT MORE DIFFICULT TO OBTAIN BENEFITS.

UNDER THE OLD LAW, A CLAIMANTS PARTIAL BENEFIT CREDIT – WHICH IS THE PORTION OF THE WBR THAT HE OR SHE COULD EARN BEFORE BEING PENALIZED BY HAVING THE UNEMPLOYMENT

**COMPENSATION REDUCED WAS FORTY PERCENT OF
THE WBR.**

**TODAY, THAT PARTIAL BENEFIT CREDIT NOW
EQUALS THIRTY PERCENT OF THE CLAIMANT'S WBR.**

**AS A RESULT, CLAIMANTS WHO FIND PART TIME
WORK WILL HAVE THEIR WBR REDUCED SOONER AS A
RESULT OF PART-TIME EARNINGS.**

**THAT MEANS A CLAIMANT COLLECTING UC MAY
ONLY EARN UP TO THIRTY PERCENT OF HIS OR HER WBR
IN PART-TIME WORK BEFORE SUCH EARNINGS ARE
OFFSET AGAINST UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS.**

**THERE ARE OTHER EXAMPLES OF SHORTCOMINGS
WITH THE NEW LAW, BUT THESE WERE THE ONES OF
MOST IMPORTANCE TO OUR MEMBERS.**

SENATORS: THIS PAIN IS REAL. DUE TO CHANGES IN THE LAW, OUR MEMBERS HAVE MISSED MORTGAGE PAYMENTS, CAR PAYMENTS AND HAVE HAD TO CUT BACK ON DAILY LIVING EXPENSES.

NOTHING IS MORE FRIGHTENING TO A WORKING FAMILY THAN NOT KNOWING WHERE THEIR NEXT SOURCE OF INCOME WILL BE.

FOR WORKERS WITH SMALL CHILDREN, ELDERLY ADULTS OR THOSE CARING FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS, THE FEAR IS EVEN GREATER.

WHAT WE ARE ASKING FOR IS A SOLUTION THAT WILL ALLOW THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN NEGATIVELY IMPACTED TO SEEK RELIEF.

OUR CONSTRUCTION WORKERS ARE WELL AWARE OF THE FACT THAT THEY PROBABLY NOT BE WORKING YEAR ROUND...HOWEVER, IT DOESN'T DIMINISH THE STELLAR JOBS THAT THEY PERFORM IN SWELTERING HEAT, HIGH WINDS AND SOMETIMES TREACHEROUS CONDITIONS.

IF THESE WERE INDEED UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES, WE ASK MEMBERS OF THIS COMMITTEE AND BOTH CHAMBERS TO CAREFULLY REVIEW THE HARM THAT IT HAS PRODUCED...REMEDY THE SITUATION...AND ENACT A SOLUTION AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.

WITH SEVERAL MONTHS LEFT IN THE CONSTRUCTION SEASON LEFT, NOW IS THE TIME TO PUT FORTH A SOLUTION THAT WILL NOT ONLY PROVIDE PEACE OF MIND FOR THOUSANDS OF WORKERS...BUT

**DEMONSTRATE TO THEM...AND THEIR FAMILIES...HOW
MUCH YOU APPRECIATE THEIR EFFORTS IN FIXING OUR
ROADS, RECONSTRUCTING OUR BRIDGES AND MAKING
OUR INFRASTRUCTURE SAFTER IN PENNSYLVANIA.**

**NOW IS THE TIME TO SHOW YOUR SUPPORT AND
APPRECIATION FOR THOSE WHO MAKE THEIR LIVING
WITH THEIR HANDS AND THEIR BACKS.**

THANK YOU FOR LISTENING.

###