

VSEA Testimony on S. 241

What does the bill do?

The bill simply allows state employees who come under the State Employees Labor Relations Act in Title 3 to bargain for grievance arbitration. That's the state employees, employees of the Vermont State College System, UVM, and the State Police.

Why does VSEA support this legislation?

Grievance Arbitration is less legalistic, more timely and creates a sense of objectivity that members of the VSEA seek with the passage of this legislation. Many of our members find the process intimidating and complicated.

Our members seek a venue for a final determination of their grievance before an entity that is completely independent from the Administration. At every step of the current process, our members are reliant on someone who is either appointed by the Governor or works for an appointee of the Governor. An Independent arbitrator provides members with a sense, whether they prevail or not, that they had an independent judgment without any appearance of conflict.

The current system which ends at the VLRB is an unusual and potentially unique to the grievance process nationally and in Vermont.

- **Binding arbitration is standard in most union contracts throughout the country in the public and private sector. To our knowledge, SELRA is one of the few labor laws that require all grievances to go before the labor board. Currently, MELRA, JELRA, EELRA as well as most labor law nationally either provide arbitration or for the parties to bargain over arbitration. The language in this bill is basically cut and pasted from the Judicial Employees Labor Relations Act**

Why are we seeking to make this change now?

Vermont's labor movement is growing. Just in the past year, we have added 7,000 new home health care workers who also will have grievances heard before the labor board. We anticipate that more workers in Vermont will be unionized in the coming years and that the board will also be asked to participate in the elections around the formation of new unions. Binding Arbitration will help to alleviate the work load of this all volunteer board.

VSEA currently has 31 cases before the board, and other unions have 4. Historically, this is a very high volume for the board, and it is a pace that is not likely to subside anytime soon.