

Prevailing Wage Testimony

My name is Matt Durocher and I am here on behalf of Carpenters Local 1996 located in South Burlington and the Vermont Building Trades which represents thousands of Vermont's Construction workers across our State. I have been in the Construction business for 25 years. On behalf of these thousands of members, we support the prevailing wage language in in the Capital Bill..

Why is prevailing wage important? We believe a responsible contractor PROVIDES benefits to their workers in addition to a livable wage. Most Vermont workers need all of their wages to survive, and there is nothing left at the end of the week to spend on their family's future, including education savings, retirement, etc. Currently many of the contractors working on Vermont State construction projects offer wages that are well below what is needed to afford health care or put money aside for retirement. Vermont's current prevailing wage law only includes wages with no Benefits.

A true prevailing wage is not a new or novel concept. In fact, the language being proposed in this bill is something which occurs on every project the State of Vermont does that includes federal dollars, including our large transportation projects. If this basic level of wages and benefits, as provided for by wages set by Davis Bacon, is appropriate for some aspects of Vermont's construction projects, it makes no sense to exclude other such projects.

The projects in Vermont that are done currently under Davis Bacon wages have not had problems finding contractors to bid on the projects. In fact, based on feedback from contractors, Union and non Union, we have not heard any complaints about working under Davis Bacon. The inclusion of benefits along with a livable wage levels the playing field so Contractors that provide Benefits would be able to compete on State funded projects.

Comment [RR1]: Do we need to explain this?

Due to the nature of the Construction business, the average working career of a construction worker is between the ages of 18 to 50. What will become of these men and women when their bodies can no longer hold up to the rigors of this work? Without benefits, many will become dependent on the State or be forced to take menial jobs in order to survive. Again, the State of Vermont has an opportunity and responsibility to Vermont's Construction workers to pass this law. These overlooked workers deserve jobs with benefits, a living wage, security and dignity in work and retirement.