

Cheryl Ewen

From: steven brown <stevenb@gmavt.net>
Sent: Tuesday, January 31, 2017 6:04 PM
To: Cheryl Ewen
Subject: Fwd: Proposed unification of the Labor Department and the Department of Commerce and Community Development

----- Original Message -----

Subject: Proposed unification of the Labor Department and the Department of Commerce and Community Development

From: steven brown <stevenb@gmavt.net>

Sent: Tuesday, January 31, 2017, 14:30

To: cewan@leg.state.vt.us

CC:

Dear Cheryl and members of the committee:

My name is Steven Brown and I am a retired Registered Nurse living in Bristol, Vermont. I am writing today to offer input regarding the proposed unification of the Department of Labor and the Department of Commerce and Community of Development. After graduating from college in Vermont in 1974, my wife and I settled in Addison County. I worked initially in a small woodworking shop and then worked as a carpenter and later a furniture maker. I have been the lowest on the totem pole, making minimum wage. I have been elated to receive a raise only to realize that the minimum wage had just risen to \$2.05 per hour. I have spent days working 9-10 hours a day in the hot sun and months in sub zero weather. I have been self-employed and a supervisor/manager of up to 35 people with associated equipment, material, and payroll. I have been layed off and layed off others. I have been injured and seen others injured. I have worked in highly unsafe settings and have seen the rising involvement of OSHA. I have been lax in regards to my own health and safety and been extremely vigilant concerning the safety of others. And as I stated earlier I went on to become an R.N. in a Hospital and a Community Clinic.

I state all of this to demonstrate that I have a good level of working experience and exposure to many workplace issues.

I would like to encourage you to keep the Departments of Labor and Commerce completely separate. The missions of these agencies are both important yet distinct. The interests of the groups they serve are different and often conflicting. Wages, health insurance, work week, flex time, paternity time, work place safety, right to organize, unemployment insurance, and workers compensation are seen as rights to be promoted by workers and all too often expenses to be minimized by employers. Ideally, workers and employers recognize that a successful company benefits all. Unfortunately this is rarely the case. As long as this true, workers need a separate Department of Labor to advocate for and regulate and enforce programs for their benefit. Sincerely,
Steven Brown