



Maine Education Association

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MEA TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO LD187

Dear Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and members of the Labor Committee:

My name is Ben Grant and I am the General Counsel for the Maine Education Association. The MEA represents nearly 24,000 educators, including teachers and other educators in nearly every public school in the state, as well as full-time faculty and other professional and support staff in both the University of Maine and Community College systems. Thousands of retired educators continue their connection and advocacy work through the MEA- Retired program. Prior to my work for the MEA, I served as outside counsel to the Maine AFL-CIO, the Maine Building Trades, and many other Unions in Maine. I also taught Labor Law at the Maine School of Law this past spring semester. The issue of the legal architecture around Union rights is one I work with every day.

I am here to convey the MEA's opposition to LD 187 and to urge you vote ought not to pass. Folks, it's Groundhog Day again here at the Labor Committee. Those of you who have worked in this issue area at all will know that as surely as the sun rises in the East, the dawn of a new Legislative session will see the introduction of this piece of legislation. This form of attack on worker collective action is as old as industrial relations itself. The sponsors here today are merely the latest to take up the fallen standard of prior generations determined to undermine the ability of working people to take the only real action available to them – solidarity - to balance power in the workplace.

The merits of this argument should be well-known to all: Unions are required to represent all workers covered by their contracts, regardless of membership status – and that representation can involve the expenditure of substantial resource. As such, we believe it is only fair and just that all those who benefit from the Union should contribute to the cost of providing those benefits. The proponents of this bill believe the opposite – namely that some workers should be able to get a free ride from other dues-paying members while realizing the same benefits.

You will also know that in the public sector, this issue is settled under the current Supreme Court – in the wrongly-decided *Janus* case. Thus, I am here today in solidarity with my brothers and sisters in the private sector who were not impacted by *Janus* – but would be harmed by this passage of this bill. We urge the Committee to defeat the entire bill, so that private sector Unions may still fairly apportion the cost of required representation and that the public sector will be free to do so when and if a future Court overturns *Janus*.

Thank you, and I would be happy to try to answer any questions.

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