

**Testimony in opposition to HB 2023**

Before the Kansas Senate Committee on Commerce

By Robert Tripp

President, United Steelworkers Local 307

Madam Chair and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today to testify in opposition to HB 2023. As the bill reads it would limit the ability of working families to engage in political advocacy for a pro-working families agenda in Kansas. HB 2023 is an unnecessary intrusion into public employees personal lives and is no than political retribution for organized labors' support for a working families agenda.

HB 2023 would prohibit the use of any Union "dues, fees, assessments or any periodic payments deducted from a member's paycheck" for a political purpose. The legislation is written broad enough to prohibit the contribution to COPE and/or PAC funds by public employees used in order to influence democratic elections.

Proponents of this bill will falsely claim that labor organizations are forcing employees to pay for election-related activities. The true purpose of these misleading statements is not to protect workers or the interests of these public employees, but to silence the free speech of working families by unfairly striping public employees of their First amendment rights simply because they had chosen to join a union.

Additionally, the measures in Hb 2023 are unnecessary. No worker can be forced to fund a union's political and legislative activities. Union members choose whether to join the union, set their own dues, elect their own leaders and vote on how and where their money will be spent. Corporations, by contrast, don't give shareholders, employees or customers any say in their political activities. Workers who disagree with the political activism of their Union can choose, first and foremost, to not make the voluntary contribution to their Union's COPE, DRIVE or other PAC fund. Kansas is a right-to-work state; thus, the member also has the right to not belong to the Union.

Furthermore, HB 2023 unfairly targets working class Kansans by stripping them of their first amendment rights, while corporate PACs, which employers often dictate that employees must belong to and are very clearly not voluntary, would still be allowed to use their dues or fees to influence political campaigns and legislation. Working families should have the same right to make their voices heard in politics as anyone else.

It is because of the fundamental inequality this bill establishes in law, for hundreds of thousands of Kansans all across the state who live in each of your districts, that we urge you to reject this outrageous attempt to strip workers of their First Amendment rights simply because they chose to join a union.