

# Senate Labor & Industry Committee

## Hearing on Unemployment Compensation & Seasonal Workers

Director - R. Michael Cortez

Senator - Lisa Baker, Chair

Senator - Tina Tartaglione, Democratic Chair

Senator - Sean Wiley

I'm honored as a member of Steamfitters Local 449 Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to speak and represent the workforce of the State of Pennsylvania at this hearing.

With the state unemployment rate at 7.5% in June of 2012 and on the rise to 8.1% in September, these amendments to the unemployment compensation benefits have had a devastating effect on the workforce in the state. These changes came at a time where we were in recovery stages from the world market crash, limited work and other national, state, municipal and personal issues that were caused by this crash.

Governor Rendell and the legislative branches of the State of Pennsylvania chose to single out and mount an attack on a particular part of the workforce in the state through the unemployment compensation benefits program. These new amendments to the law was their answer to quick fix a nationwide problem of rising unemployment and diminishing state unemployment compensation funds in the state. Again I would consider this an outright attack on the labor unions and its members which are major contributors to the fund through our employers.

The world economic situation in turmoil was part of the cause for the closing of a company where I was employed for about 15 years. During that

time I never needed unemployment compensation. All the time I worked there and all the moneys I paid in to the unemployment compensation benefit program and nothing was paid out to me during that 15 years. Following the company closing I was forced to travel great distances to secure work. That meant being away from my family for long periods of time.

This particular amendment to Article IV had a devastating effect on me personally, as I was laid off in January of 2014 and after having a fairly successful 2013 year, I was denied unemployment. This meant that I would be without an income for at least 12 weeks, the first quarter of 2014, because I did not meet the 49.5% criteria of:

#### **Article IV - Qualifications Required to Secure Compensation**

Section 401.

Paragraph (A) (2) of the wage requirements specified by the law that was amended - **June 12, 2012 under PL 577, No.60.**

I was declared a seasonal worker and then denied unemployment compensation.

Do you know what kind of stress that put on me and my family having no income for several weeks following this determination?

As a strong union member and a part of the Pennsylvania workforce, I urge this committee and your constituents, to seriously consider recommending repealing or changing this amendment and any other changes that were made that will prevent contributing Pennsylvania workers from securing unemployment compensation.