



**Testimony on Senate Bill 355
Bruce Tunnell, Executive Vice President Kansas AFL-CIO**

Chair Wagle and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the Kansas AFL-CIO. My name is Bruce Tunnell, and I am the Executive Vice President of the AFL-CIO.

The Kansas AFL-CIO is opposed to the changes proposed in Senate Bill 355 that threaten workers livelihood and safety.

The Wage Payment Act today requires the Secretary of Labor to appeal on behalf of an employee with a valid claim for unpaid wages if the claim is less than \$10,000. This is a commonsense provision that protects workers regardless of their ability to pay for representation.

Forcing an employee to obtain their own representation or navigate the appeal process themselves puts the working poor at a disadvantage even in instances where the Secretary of Labor agrees that they have a valid claim.

Creating the conditions for even one employer to get away with not paying what the Secretary determines to be a valid claim will do nothing to discourage other employers from pushing the boundaries of fairness.

Senate Bill 355 also deletes language that allows the Department's Division of Industrial Safety and Health to inspect private company worksites for safety and health hazards.

We fail to see how businesses or employees gain from creating an environment where the safety and health of workers in the private sector is ever in doubt, and while we wish that OSHA had the manpower to inspect a workplace in the private sector in a timely manner, that is not always possible. We oppose eliminating the authority for the Secretary to step in during a critical time and conduct those inspections.

Thank you

Senate Commerce Committee

Date: February 8, 2012

Attachment 8