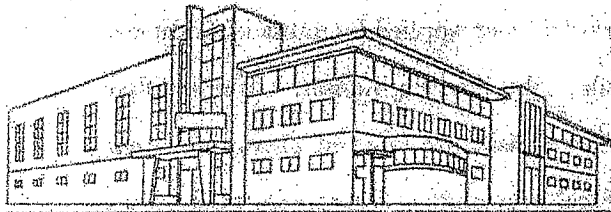


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## Carpenters' District Council of Greater Saint Louis and Vicinity



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### Testimony In Opposition to House Bill 2069

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Carpenters' District Council of Greater St. Louis and Vicinity

February 14, 2013

Chairman Kleeb and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony in opposition to House Bill 2069.

The bill before you today poses a potential threat to the integrity of local autonomy in Kansas and the ability of local leaders to improve the standard of living for the constituents they represent. HB 2069 would bar local governmental bodies, including cities and counties, from enacting ordinances that would establish wage and benefit standards that exceed state or federal minimums.

The type of ordinances that would be banned are sometimes referred to as "living wage" laws, which require employers to pay their employees wages and benefits at rates that are higher than what's required under state or federal law. And why would local officials want to do that? Maybe it's because they recognize that minimums are just that, minimums, which are frequently not enough to be able to sustain workers in the communities where they live.

These ordinances are frequently passed in communities where the cost of living is higher and local lawmakers have recognized that minimum wage just isn't enough. Local

House Commerce & Economic  
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lawmakers also recognize that some employers will always pay their workers exactly the lowest amount they are required to under the law and not a penny more.

This concept of enacting living wage standards has been applied by municipal officials across the country and by locally-elected officials right here in Kansas. The Unified Government of Wyandotte County and Kansas City Kansas has enacted prevailing wage standards. Shawnee County requires that the federal prevailing wage rate be paid on all county construction projects. And members of the Kansas City Kansas School Board USD #500 have passed a resolution that requires that wages be paid at the federal prevailing wage rate on certain construction projects in the school district even where there is no federal funding involved.

It would appear that if HB 2069 is passed, each of those pre-existing ordinances and policies would be invalidated. Officials in each of those jurisdictions certainly evaluated these issues and the potential impact on their constituents before deciding to impose the higher wage requirements. Why, now, should the legislature step in and negate the decisions these locally-elected officials have already made?

This bill is troubling on several fronts. It provides a safe haven for employers who want to increase their profits by ensuring that their labor costs will always be kept to the lowest amount possible. That might not have as much of an impact in parts of Kansas where the cost of living remains low. But where the cost of living is higher, the minimum rates don't go nearly as far. This bill could help ensure that businesses keep more of their profits, but what does that mean for Kansas workers? Boosting corporate profits at the expense of living standards is not how we should be promoting economic growth in this State.

And equally important is the impact this legislation will have on local decision-making. Decisions about promoting economic growth should be made by locally-elected officials in each community, not dictated by lawmakers in Topeka. We elect our leaders to make decisions that will benefit both the business community and local workers in each

community where we live. We need to trust them to continue to balance the interests of both business and labor.

We encourage you to consider the potential impact to Kansas workers and their families and ask that you reject this bill.