



KANSAS STATE COUNCIL
SOCIETY FOR HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT



Testimony in Favor of SB 187
February 21, 2013
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Chairman Lynn and honorable committee members,

I am Natalie Bright, governmental affairs consultant for Kansas Society for Human Resource Management (KS SHRM). Thank you for the opportunity to appear in favor of SB 187, which proposes to change the nominating committees for the workers compensation and employment security boards.

For those unfamiliar with KS SHRM, it is an organization comprised of over 2,300 human resource (HR) professionals in Kansas. Our members serve public and private sectors as well as large and small businesses. The focus of the HR professional is to facilitate between the employer and employee so that a safe and productive work environment is reached. On a daily basis these members are on the front line when it comes to works compensation and unemployment insurance issues.

Today, KS SHRM stands in support of SB 187 because it proposes to address what has become a contentious and closed process with little ability for the business community to participate. Currently, the process allows only the Kansas Chamber and the Kansas AFL-CIO to recommend ALJ candidates for the workers compensation and unemployment compensation process. While there are some members of KS SHRM who also belong to Kansas Chamber, the majority of them do not. As a result, our organization has little ability to influence their recommendations. The membership of KS SHRM has a significant interest in the workers compensation ALJ selection process as many of our members are responsible for coordinating the claims for both the employer and employee. They have a vantage point unlike any other interest group in Kansas. As such, we strongly believe that the broadening of the recommendation process and including more groups involved in the system you will produce a better, more qualified candidate.

In addition, KS SHRM supports the consolidation of appointments for the Unemployment Compensation system. It is KS SHRM's belief that by consolidating the two under one review board will streamline the appointment process and bring a larger pool of candidates from which the selections can be made. A consistent concern we hear from KS SHRM members regarding the Unemployment System is the inconsistency and lack of practical work experience of unemployment insurance referees. The inexperience leads to unjust decisions for both employees and employers. KS SHRM would argue if we can have better information and experienced review panelist, the system will be fairer for both the employer and employee.

In addition, SB 187 also proposes to increase the pay for the workers compensation appellate judges more comparable to the existing market place. The members of KS SHRM believe this will attract additional, better qualified applicants and help improve the longevity of their service.

During the 2011 session, KS SHRM was part of the collective effort to pass sweeping Workers Compensation reform in Kansas. After witnessing the success of this collective effort, I am confident the groups named in SB 187 can together greatly improve the selection processes in Kansas for both the workers compensation system and the unemployment compensation system.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today in support of SB 187. I will stand for questions.