

Written Submission of

Randy D. Meek, Chairman

**Nebraska State Legislative Board
Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen
(BLET)
Rail Conference Division of the International
Brotherhood of Teamsters**

On

LB 57

Business and Labor Committee

Nebraska Unicameral

January 29th, 2007

Comments on LB 457
February 29th, 2007
Committee of Business and Labor

Honorable Senators:

My name is Randy Meek. I am Chairman of the Nebraska State Legislative Board of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, and the elected representative of approximately 1000 engineers and trainmen in the State of Nebraska working on the Burlington Northern Santa Fe and Union Pacific railroads.

We express our support for this bill as a way to harmonize workplaces and restore a small measure of fairness and economic justice to those who democratically and freely elect to have union representation.

Members of our union, under the Railway Labor Act as amended in 1951, are required to hold union membership where a union holds a contract. This is called a “union shop” provision and because it is federally mandated, there are literally thousands of employees in Nebraska working for railroads and airlines that are required by law to share in the costs of administering and negotiating their contracts. The National Right to Work for Less organization wrings their hands at our arrangement and has supported unsuccessful attempts to change it in the past. The truth is that the railroad unionized workplace has very few dissenters. We are required to exempt those portions of dues assessed for political purposes upon request, yet of the 1000 members we represent, we have never had more than two or three actually request that exemption. It has been my experience that there is little disagreement on the benefits of union representation, and the work environment and pay scales at railroads would be vastly different without it.

We support the effort to extend provisions requiring cost sharing to the public and private sector unions in Nebraska. It is, at its most fundamental, an issue of fairness and justice. The decision by the majority has always been the standard of democracy. When a freely elected government decides to implement a tax to support services for the public good, the voters that elected that government are not permitted to “freedom to live tax free.” The important thing is that they had a vote. It is compulsory on that citizen to share in the tax burden whether they supported the elected government or not. Could you imagine budgeting for essential government

services if paying taxes were an option? Yet the freely elected unions in this state must do something very similar to that on a daily basis. Where is the justice to the union member required to also pay the costs for representing their co-workers, who get all the benefits, but pay none of the costs.

This law would have no effect on railroad and airline unions already operating in this state unless the Railway Labor Act was modified. Given the wild swings in ideology in Washington this is not inconceivable. That is our member's direct interest in this bill. It would give us some measure of protection in Nebraska and we urge its adoption.

Thank you,
Randy D. Meek, Chairman,
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