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Assembly Committee on Labor takes up four vital workers' rights bills

Madison, Wis. – AFT-Wisconsin President Bryan Kennedy applauded the Assembly Committee on Labor today, stating that their action on four assembly bills relating to labor issues was a “step in the right direction.”

The four bills, which would advance the rights of working people around the state, were heard in a public hearing earlier today in the State Capitol. The bills include:

- Assembly Bill 31: allowing workers to file suit in circuit court to recover damages from employment discrimination;
- Assembly Bill 95: requiring school districts to negotiate lesson preparation time with teachers as part of the collective bargaining agreements;
- Assembly Bill 105: prohibiting municipal employers from unilaterally ending grievance arbitration or fair-share agreements during contract negotiations; and
- Assembly Bill 172: mandating that labor history be taught as part of the curriculum in all public K-12 school districts.

Kennedy was on hand at the hearing to register on behalf of AFT-Wisconsin in support of all four bills. “These bills address a wide spectrum of issues, from protections against employment discrimination to the ability of our teachers to provide high-quality education to our children,” stated Kennedy. “I strongly support of each of these measures on behalf of the 17,000 AFT-Wisconsin members throughout the state.”

Kennedy also testified in support of Assembly Bill 172, the Labor History Bill, when he indicated that teaching labor history is important in part because there is a strong tradition of labor activism in Wisconsin.

“From the very inception of the nation’s labor movement, Wisconsin activists have been at the forefront of struggles that brought us safety and wellness standards, an eight-hour workday and an end to child labor abuses,” testified Kennedy. “We should be proud of the fact that Wisconsin unionists have historically led the charge among ‘the folks who brought you the weekend.’”

Kennedy indicated that the Assembly Committee on Labor’s quick action on these four labor-friendly bills was telling of the committee’s attitude toward labor in Wisconsin. “The committee’s expeditious action on these bills demonstrates the committee’s openness to meeting the needs of Wisconsin’s working families. I applaud the committee’s efficiency in these matters, and genuinely look forward to working with them to advance these causes.”