

February 23, 2015



Representative Shemia Fagan, Chair  
House Committee On Consumer Protection and Government Effectiveness  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Chair Fagan and Members of the Committee:

The Professional and Technical Employees Local 17 represents approximately 9,000 employees in Washington and Oregon, including about 750 who work for the City of Portland as engineers, planners, technicians, and other similar classifications.

We have direct experience with public contracting of professional services, as many of our employers contract specialty-engineering work to private companies. We keenly understand that impropriety between contracting agencies and private companies undermine trust in government, and this causes significant concerns for our members who pride themselves on their work and service to the public. Additionally, we are concerned about revolving doors between the public sector and private companies, as these are often used to attract talent from the public sector to private companies, which has in extreme cases resulted in public employers unable to retain new talent.

Therefore, we understand the concept behind HB 2976. However, we have concerns with how the bill is currently written. Specifically, there is no exception made for employees who have been laid off or otherwise involuntarily terminated. In cases when an employee has left employment with a contracting agency involuntarily, restricting their ability to freely apply for jobs in their field places undue burden on families who depend on their ability to quickly find new employment during a moment of hardship. Many of our members work in specialty engineering and professional fields where the number of potential local employers is quite small. In more rural areas of the state, this problem may be amplified because of an even more limited number of potential employers.

Thanks for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Elliot Levin  
Research Director and Legislative Advocate  
Professional and Technical Employees Local 17

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