

Senate Bill 1066

January 5, 2011, Executive Committee

Testimony as transcribed from the official Committee recording of the Illinois Chamber of Commerce President Douglas Whitley

I appreciate your patience in the long afternoon. I would like to depart from the remarks I was going to present to make a point and that is why are we here. I believe the reason we are here is that unemployment in Illinois and well over half the counties is double digit. I believe we are here because over the last several years that hundreds and thousands of employees and people of the State have left Illinois. I believe we are here because we routinely hear about businesses that are choosing to locate in our neighboring states or in southern States. I believe we are here because of businesses who choose NOT to do business in Illinois. And one of the major reasons that we consistently hear about is that Illinois has high costs in Workers' compensation. When the testimony was presented to the various task forces, multistate employers who have businesses and business concerns all across this country comparable plants comparable work were able to come forward and say Illinois is our highest cost state. In 2005 this state made some changes, it has been five years. What I heard today is that that people said we got issues but for some reason a lot of these people here with issues don't recognize that this is an ongoing process. The Illinois Chamber is here today to say we support the changes that are being offered and we encourage the members of the General Assembly to approve this bill. But the legislation pending before this General Assembly does not go nearly far enough to satisfy the objectives of employers who are looking for extensive reforms in our State. But there is no question that the legislation presented by Representative Bradley embodies improvements over the existing law. Furthermore, the efforts that have been put forth over these last few weeks demonstrate that there is a significant effort on the part of many to address reforms in Illinois workers' compensation laws and in the administration of those laws. The fact that the pending legislation does not include everything that that every employer would want everything that the doctor would want or every hospital would want doesn't diminish in any way the progress that we are trying to make by passing this law. The stress of the time lines that we have been under, gathering information and engaging in conversations with many well informed and well-intended people, means that as we come here today, we don't have perfection in fact we will probably never have perfection but it is critical that we make progress, it is critical that we address the issues, that we demonstrate to people outside the State of Illinois as well as employers in this State that we recognize that there are issues that need to be addressed in the General Assembly is prepared to do so. To do nothing is to say that what we have been doing is correct and right and I would suggest to you that the hundreds and thousands of jobs that we have lost is in and of themselves pretty good

indication that we are not on is not the correct path. And employers need to have sense that this state is recognizing that there problems and that we are going to address them. We believe that the proposal that is before you basically maintains Illinois as the highest benefit structure in the country. We do not believe that this proposal takes away any benefits from injured workers that were gained in 2005. Indeed, we believe that it will improve medical care in Illinois. We are not here to suggest that this is the panacea or that this is perfect. In fact, we are here to say that we will recommend that you pursue what you've got in front of you and for gosh sakes let's keep at it. Let's continue to work on this issue going forward for an extended period of time. There is no quick fix, there is no silver bullet, it's complicated, there are many people with interest in this subject area and we need to listen to them and we need to adapt. But there is no such thing as okay this is it, walk away, wash your hands we have fixed workers compensation and the problems in Illinois. We will improve the situation in Illinois if Representative Bradley's legislation is passed. Are we done with it . . . Not at all, Thank you very much.