



Testimony on Connecticut Contract Supersedence

Submitted by Isabel Blank, External Affairs Manager

Chairman and members of committee, good afternoon. My name is Isabel Blank and I am the manager of external affairs at the Yankee Institute for public policy. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

On November 6th, your district decided that they wanted you to be their advocate in this building. And once elected, you have spent every single day hearing your constituents' stories, listening to their worries, their accomplishments, their needs. And you take that information and you fight for your residents to have the most success and happiness in their lives as possible. You want the best for your district, for your constituents, it is in your job description and it is in the best interest of the state.

That is being threatened.

Special interest groups have the ability to override those decisions you make and eliminate the great actions you have taken for this state, exempting themselves from freedom-of-information laws, or even overriding state laws designed to protect the public.

In Connecticut, collectively bargained government-worker contracts can override existing state law.

Additionally, these contracts frequently exclude mention of the laws they override, making it nearly impossible for the public to understand who must obey the same laws they do, and who is legally exempt.

This is a violation of the spirit of transparency and open government.

As Connecticut residents and policy advocates, we pride ourselves on producing innovative policy and being leaders in the nation.

Right now, we're lagging behind.

CT is the only state in New England to let special interest groups dictate state law. And in the past 30 years, 127 potentially law-altering contracts were passed without a vote by the legislature.

We've all heard the appalling story from this summer of a central Connecticut state university professor who sexually assaulted several of his female students. We don't know much about the case or what types of disciplinary action the university has taken because Professors in his union are uniquely exempt from freedom of information laws. Why? Because their contract says so.

In Connecticut, special interest groups can decide certain laws should not apply to them.

In Connecticut, special interest groups are above the law.

The entire system of contract legislation erodes the rule of law and undermines the very premise of our representative government. It eliminates your ability to serve as an effective legislator and protect equality in our state. It fundamentally privileges one segment of society above all others, by putting a select few above the law.

This unjust and unequal treatment should not stand.