



# Analytics

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**RE:** Delaware politicians do what the unions tell them

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With the closure of the GM and Chrysler automobile plants, the unions' share of employment in Delaware has fallen below the national average. But the remaining unions, through their supply of campaign funds, volunteers and votes have the Governor and most of the legislature in their pockets. Union management is willing to disadvantage Delaware's citizens in order to advantage themselves.

**What is the evidence?**

First, even though only one-third of Delaware's public school eighth graders can read and do math with proficiency, the DSEA (the teachers union) and its policies go unchallenged by the politicians. The DSEA management brags that the state Department of Education and the Governor do "what the union tells them..." Although charter school enrollment is up 230% over the last eight years, the DSEA opposes any legislation that gives parents the ability to control funding for the education of their children.

Second, the Delaware prevailing wage, which must be paid on any capital project using state funds, has been shown to set construction labor wages 40% above market, yet the politicians do nothing for fear of the building trade unions. The Delaware Department of Labor office responsible for the enforcement of the prevailing wage is headed by Anthony DeLuca, a union electrician and the majority leader in the state senate.

Third, the politicians are unwilling to deal seriously with the runaway benefits granted to public employees over the past decade. Their solution to the current \$6 billion unfunded retirement health care obligation is to exempt incumbent employees while "saving" \$151 million over five years by tightening up the rules on new hires.

The most recent union affront to competition, economic growth and Delaware citizens is HB 180. The primary sponsors of the bill are two union electricians, Representative Michael Mulrooney and Senator Anthony DeLuca. The bill claims to advance the "public interest" by requiring anyone doing electrical contract work in Delaware to be licensed as a Journeyperson or Apprentice Electrician by the state's Board of Electrical Examiners.

The previous regulations, active for over 50 years in Delaware, permitted unlicensed helpers or apprentices to perform work under the supervision of a Master electrician, with all the work performed to ultimately be inspected by an accredited Electrical Inspection Agency. Laborers and helpers could dig a trench, glue PVC conduit together, drill holes in studs and pull wiring through them, as long as they were supervised and the work inspected.



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**So, what does HB 180 accomplish? It increases the costs of electrical contract work by reducing the supply of “qualified” labor. It increases license fees to the state. It grows the Delaware Department of Labor as staff must now check for labor licensing compliance at construction sites. It significantly expands the continuing education industry for electric workers.**

**Despite the overlap between the officers of the local electrical union (IBEW 313) and the members of the Board of Electrical Examiners, despite no representation from Sussex County on the Board of Electrical Examiners, despite the obvious conflict of interest of the bill’s primary sponsors, despite the absence of bill workshop minutes, despite no committee reports from either the House or the Senate, despite the lack of clear limitations on what constitutes “electrical” work (e.g., wiring for a new furnace), the bill was passed, signed by the Governor and is slated to be in effect starting June 30, 2012.**

**The acquiescence of Delaware’s politicians to union management is thwarting quality of the future labor force, unnecessarily driving up the costs of Delaware’s infrastructure improvements, and locking in future taxpayers to a debt almost double the size of the state’s annual operating budget. Why is there no push back?**

**Dr. John E. Stapleford, Director  
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