



May 10, 2023

Senate Labor Committee
Rhode Island General Assembly
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Committee Members,

On behalf of the National Restaurant Association, I write to express opposition to Senate Bill 477, An Act Relating to Labor and Labor Relations – Labor Relations Act.

S.477 aims to prevent employers from discussing "political matters" during staff meetings. However, the bill's broad definition of "political matters" could encompass various topics, including social events, charitable campaigns, and collective bargaining agreements. This legislation could have negative consequences for both employers and employees. Mandatory staff meetings often serve as a vital tool for employers to keep their workforce informed about critical issues that affect their jobs, benefits, and workplace environment. By limiting the scope of these discussions, employees may be left uninformed about significant developments that could impact their job security, employee benefits, and government operations affecting their workplace.

The bill's impact would be far-reaching, as it would restrict employers from discussing retirement plans, health benefits, wages, and even community projects with their employees. As a result, employees would lose a valuable source of reliable information that directly affects them.

In its current form, the proposed legislation may conflict with longstanding precedents related to employers' free speech rights under the First Amendment and the National Labor Relations Act. For these reasons, we urge you to oppose S.477.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Whately". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Vice President
State Affairs and Grassroots Advocacy