

User's Note for Edition One:

Welcome to the first edition of "Science in Action"! This new communication service of the Wisconsin Science Professionals moves timely, important information into your hands. Future editions of "Science in Action" will feature improved looks and website connections. Please understand that this new service is a work in progress. If you have suggestions for styling or delivery, contact 1st VP Roger Springman at 608-224-4545.

Science in Action: An Electronic Bulletin of the Wisconsin Science Professionals

Science in Action provides short, timely updates on major issues affecting membership and is released on an as-needed basis. References for additional information is provided at the end of each article. Science in Action is coordinated with stories and articles that appear in Professionally Speaking, our hard copy newsletter, and our website: www.wspunion.org.

In this Issue

Enterprise Travel: Where is it Going?
Science Fleet Arbitration Update
Dental Agreement Made With State
WSEU "Me Too" Progress

Enterprise Travel: Where is it Going?

Most of you are aware that the Department of Administration (DOA) imposed a series of travel-related directives on airline booking, hotel use, P-and T-cards, and car rental. Science and all other Unions challenged these directives from Day 1. Our starting position remains that these directives are bargainable as they affect the terms and conditions of employment. WPEC, our sister AFT-W Union, filed numerous grievances and Science joined them in filing an Unfair Labor Practices (ULP) challenge. The initial ULP hearing was heard on October 31st.

Enterprise Travel is full of holes, problems, and hypocrises. Agencies find it troublesome and burdensome and that is why it is not being implemented evenly. Only 325 hotels were initially approved for state employee use across the state. Research conducted by Science and WPEC confirmed that DOA effectively made up the purported cost savings figure of \$4.1 million. Add to the above the media and legal scrutiny being given to the campaign donations from Adelman Travel to the Doyle campaign and there are even more reasons to be cynical about the purpose of the entire exercise.

What to do? The most important thing we can do when following Enterprise Travel guidelines is to document that it is NOT saving the state and taxpayers money. Whenever you observe this happening, write up a summary of your findings and share it with us. If you get burned on Enterprise Travel for whatever reason, you should also consider filing a grievance. There is a good chance that Enterprise Travel will eventually fall under the weight of its own bad design and implementation. For example, airline booking rules were just relaxed on the use of Adelman Travel. Now, all you have to do is get a quote from them and then you can go on your own to find cheaper airfares. Your agency will give you the best cues on what to do. If not, when in doubt, always use Uniform Travel Guidelines on meal rates, hotel booking, etc. Questions? Need more information? Contact Susan Beyler, DNR at 262-574-2152 or Roger Springman, DATCP at 608-224-4545.

Science Fleet Arbitration Update

In January 2005, Science declared its intent to arbitrate fleet guidelines imposed by the DOA in 2004. After a respite due to the departure of AFT-W staff representative Camille Monahan, this long overdue arbitration is moving forward. Legal research has been conducted by Tim Hawks, our attorney, and Mindy Taranto, AFT-W staff representative, and new information has been uncovered about the unreasonable and onerous nature of the guidelines. Recent information supplied to 2nd VP, Gary Steffen through the SWAN network was particularly helpful. If you supplied economic information about the impact of fleet guidelines, THANK YOU. The next step is a hearing before the Wisconsin Employment Relations Commission.

DOA's fleet guidelines have created many economic and non-economic hardships on Science members. Some of the severest hardships have been felt by members with assigned State vehicles who now must make decisions on using their personal cars (if they have one available) vs. assigned vehicles on a day-to-day basis. The imposition of strict mileage accounting has affected many Science members. There are yet other Science members who are now being expected to use their personal car while doing routine State business, including the providing of auto insurance . . . all with no additional compensation. To top it off, we also have Science members who are expected to transport biologic and hazardous agents in their personal car while doing State business. We believe that all of these examples and others are wholly unfair in the absence of negotiations and additional compensation.

If you have interest in the fleet arbitration OR have further information to share on its impacts, please contact Mark McCloskey, DATCP at 608-224-4532 or Rick Thorbjornsen, Department of Natural Resources at 715-762-1358.

Dental Agreement Made with State

There is good news to report on this front. In September, the State announced its intent to accept a Science settlement offer coming out of an arbitration filing in January 2005. While the details of the proposed plan remain subject to final negotiation, President Donalea Dinsmore believes there is a very good chance that the new plan will be available in early 2006. The carrier will be Dental Blue and we are seeking to keep the plan open to all members through a mandatory open enrollment period. Chris Carlson, Ken Olson, Tim Hawks, and Donalea Dinsmore worked hard to have the plan available during the Open Enrollment period this year, but settlement language and implementation details proved too difficult.

The battle for a Science dental plan was long and hard. Coming out of the 2003 – 2005 contract, the State had agreed to provide Science with a plan whose premiums were significantly covered by the State. Unfortunately significant dispute arose over economic provisions of the package when WPEC and other Unions took other benefits in lieu of a state-subsidized dental plan. This put Science in a very difficult position. Still, because the State had not even put a plan on the table, the State saw that Science would have prevailed in a final arbitration hearing. Hence we have an outcome that puts Science ahead of other Unions and one that allows us to build on the current package in future negotiations.

Until plan details are finalized, we are urging interested members to go to the University's website at www.uwsa.edu/hr/benefits/ins/dentblue.htm to see how the plan is operated along with its current benefits. Plan questions? You can contact Donalea Dinsmore at president@wspunior.org

WSEU "Me Too" Progress

This is another lingering issue from 2003- 2005 bargaining. As you may recall, Science settled relatively early in this bargaining cycle and we protected ourselves from losing ground to other Union settlements with "me too" language. In July 2005, WSEU locals accepted offers with the State that gave them favorable treatment on a number of items, (e.g. health insurance, part-time employee benefits, signing bonus). Because of our "me too" clause, we immediately petitioned the Office of State Employment Relations (OSER) to extend similar benefits to Science members. In mid-September, President Donalea Dinsmore received a lengthy letter from Karen Timberlake, Director, OSER denying our claims and the eligibility of our members to seek any "me too"-related benefits. Within days of receiving this adverse letter, Donalea filed a Step 3 Grievance on behalf of all Science members. It is likely that a Step 3 meeting on this matter will be held in November.

Should you have question on "me too" provisions, you can contact Donalea Dinsmore at president@wspunior.org