



WISCONSIN SCIENCE PROFESSIONALS

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SCIENCE IN ACTION

July 29, 2011 WSP Update

WSP's Representative Council has been working on member's behalf during these uncertain times. We have continued to deal with grievances (for example the six furlough days that will be placed into all bargaining member's accounts in August – for more see item 1 below). We have also continued to meet with management of state agencies and most importantly tried our best to understand the changes that we all face. Included in this update are some of the most important items that you should be aware of.

Please remember, that we are all in this together and it bothers all of us that are working in the Representative Council when one of the people in our bargaining unit is adversely affected by the things going on in state government these days. We would like to ask for your patience and understanding as we work through these issues as best we can. It is important to know that there is no real union without your involvement – this has never been truer than it is today. Please contribute to our mutual benefit and realize we are trying to make this the best it can be in spite of the circumstances.

In light of the changes and the stress that everyone is under, please take time to take care of your selves and also please be tolerant of those who are working to improve things for the better. We believe that this is not the time to bicker or hold on to past grudges. It is this time for coalition building and collective action. We realize that this is not easy for anyone. With tight family budgets, you may be considering not renewing your membership with WSP or if you have never become a member, we urge you to think about the fact that these are unprecedented times. WSP is dedicated to professionalism and dedicated to great public service and good, honest and open government. All of these things mentioned above, in addition to the fact state workers have become scapegoats for the state's economic woes and the fact that we are being used as pawns in the political process, are reasons why you should rethink your reasons for not wanting to help us work as a group to minimize the effects of these radical changes on our fellow bargaining unit members and the citizens of Wisconsin. Please join us in collective action to make our workplaces be places where we feel like we can speak up and make a difference, help enhance our citizen's quality of life, and where we can be proud of our government and our public service.

We believe we can succeed in ensuring our members are treated fairly and will have a voice in their workplace. However, we can only do this if we have enough dedicated people help us prepare for the rough road ahead. Just so you know, we are trying to organize work site representatives in every building in the state where we have at least 10 bargaining unit members. Please contact a WSP representative council member to volunteer to assist with organizing our work sites. Thank you again for your determination and regard for your fellow bargaining unit members.

For those of you who have signed up to continue WSP membership, we thank you. For those of you who did not yet sign up, please think about what is important - not just from the economic perspective, but from what really matters to yourself and the future of our government and our state. See item 6 for information about how to sign up to become a member.

1. First the Good News!!! Furlough update

Full time employees will receive 6 days (48 hours) returned from the 16 furlough days that were taken. These hours will be placed into your sabbatical leave account (even if you don't already have one) and should be reflected on the first check in August. For employees that work less than full time and took less than 16 furlough days your time will be pro-rated. If you did not take all the furlough days that you were required to take (depending if you were full time or less than full time) you will not receive the sabbatical hours until all the furloughs are taken. Keep checking your account balances to see that you have received proper credit for your sabbatical hours. WSP will work with members that have issues. Please contact us if you have further questions. A WSP officers list is available at: <http://wi.aft.org/WSP/index.cfm?action=contact>

2. Group Insurance Board (GIB) Changes to Retirement and Insurance: The Group Insurance Board (members appointed by the Governor) sets up the basic framework for insurance programs for state employees – they are administered by the Department of Employee Trust Funds (ETF). The GIB was directed in the budget to come up with a 5% reduction of health care costs. The result is a transfer of costs for health insurance and for retirement to the employees.

The big change in health insurance costs is to out of pocket expenses (OOP). For people in the lowest cost plans, known as Tier 1 (e.g., those in HMOs), the OOP for single coverage as of 1/1/12 will be \$500 per year. For families the OOP maximum will be \$1,000 per year. For those covered under the standard plan, the OOP maximums will be \$1,000 per year for single coverage and \$2,000 per year for family coverage. In addition, co-pays for Emergency Room visits are increased from \$60 to \$75 and these co-pays are not counted towards the OOP maximums. More information is available from you HR departments. Also here is something from the HR department at UW-Madison that explains some of these changes: <http://www.wisconsin.edu/hr/benefits/budgetsummary.pdf>

3. Increased employee contributions for retirement and health insurance: The Increased payments will be taken out on August 25th paycheck. For more specific information on how it may affect you personally, contact your HR department. The Employee Trust Fund website has a FAQ on the changes to the retirement system: http://etf.wi.gov/news/Act_10_Employer_Communications.pdf.

4. Why Have a Union? Many states have public employees represented by unions in spite of the fact that they are not allowed to collectively bargain in the state. However, even in these limited rights states, unions can help ensure that worker's rights are protected and that your voice is heard in the workplace. Whether it is a safety and health issue or an issue of possible discipline or unfair treatment in a workplace, many workers can benefit from the collective action of a group of employees dedicated to ensuring fairness and a more collaborative relationship between workers and management. To find out more about some of the things we all take for granted that are in our WSP contract, see attached document (or go to [Why Be In The WSP Union?](#)).
5. What Next for WSP? Whether to seek Certification or Not
 - The issue – the Budget Repair Bill (Act 10) took away collective bargaining for everything but wages, limiting them to less than the cost of living. For WSP to retain the ability to collectively bargain under the Budget Bill (Act 32), 51 percent of all employees in a bargaining unit (not just of voting members!) need to annually vote in favor of recertifying. If a 51 percent majority vote is not achieved, the employees in the bargaining unit are not represented by a union. This is a very high hurdle – some would say it is unattainable.

The WSP representative council is currently evaluating our options. Since this is an important decision, we would like to not operate in a vacuum and would like to hear from you. We currently are planning to send you a certified letter to your home that asks for your opinion on certification of WSP with the State of Wisconsin as a union that officially represents those positions currently in the bargaining unit. The letter will also serve as notice that if we decide not to certify our union with the state, that our relationship with our members will have to change.

Look for a mailing to be sent to you sometime this summer. It is important for the WSP Representative Council to know you received this information and we will require a signature for receipt. We apologize in advance for any inconvenience (e.g., if you are not home, etc.), but it is very important that we contact you about the future of WSP. The WSP representative council is really trying to decide this in a democratic way with the best interest of the people we represent.

A lot of work rebuilding our union is needed and we can truly use your help. Please give us feedback on these issues. We are in this together and the greater the perspective we have, the more informed we will be and we hope this will help us obtain a better result. We have the ability to make a fresh start here. We hope you have an interest in our common goal of ensuring a voice in our workplaces. Here is a short summary of some of the issues we all face with reference to certification.

- The decision to be made: Whether to seek certification
 - “Pros” for Certification:
 - We are recognized by the state and can bargain for all represented classifications in the bargaining unit
 - We are formally recognized as the bargaining agent for all represented classifications in the bargaining unit
 - “Cons” for Certification:
 - Annual certification
 - Cost/time/personnel to conduct certification

- Having to represent people who may not wish representation or have not paid dues
- Can only bargain for salaries with maximum equal or less than cost of living
- Pros for Not Certifying
 - No cost
 - No one dictates what we do
 - We only represent those who choose to be members
 - We have no represented classification restrictions. This would allow anyone to become a member if they pay dues, including management, LTEs, and classifications not typically in our unit.
- Cons for Not Certifying
 - Not able to officially bargain for wages with the State
 - State employees who do not pay dues have no union representation
 - WSP may be a much smaller union in number of members

The WSP Council has reviewed and evaluated these choices and recommends that we choose NON-Certification. However, we would greatly appreciate your opinions and concerns on this option. Please respond by emailing to: President, Lisa Treffinger at wspresident@wspunion.org Membership Secretary, Sara Schreiber at membership@wspunion.org First Vice President, Jeff Meyers at jd711@chorus.net or Treasurer, Brooke Ludwig at treasurer@wspunion.org

6. Membership & Dues Sign-Up: WSP's constitution states that members must be in good standing, meaning they have to pay dues to be considered members. If you have not signed up, your membership will expire at the end of July (the state has stopped taking dues out of you paychecks due to the budget bill). If you don't sign up, depending on how WSP representative council decides on certification, you may not be eligible for representation by your union regarding work site environment, potential grievances, and other benefits provided by WSP and AFT. This is an unfortunate place for WSP and our members to be in, but the realities of the changes to collective bargaining laws have great impacts on all of us. In the future, we cannot afford to provide services to people that do not contribute to our mutual goal of making sure the workplace is safe and fair for all.

SO, WE ARE ASKING YOU TO SIGN UP FOR DUES DEDUCTION. THERE ARE 5 WAYS:

- a. By electronic fund transfer or credit card (Note: credit card transactions add over \$1 to our bank fees per transaction – therefore we do not recommend its use)
- b. By Check: go to link below, complete the form, sign it, enclose check, and mail to Treasurer
- c. By Phone – Call for help – Brooke Ludwig- Treasurer
- d. By Mail - contact Brooke Ludwig- Treasurer
- e. At workplace meetings – Contact a WSP Representative Council Member or WSP steward.

Check signup link:

https://weare1.aft.org/HTMLPreviews/WSP_03732_ByCheck.html?Local=03732&DuesMethod=Other

Treasurer Contact Info:

Brooke Ludwig, 715-559-1517 (24/7 contact #), 1420 Folsom St, Eau Claire, WI 54703

7. AFT-W Dental Insurance (AKA Fortis). All those enrolled in Fortis (the AFT-W dental insurance) have received a letter indicating their options for continuing the insurance. Members who have insurance through the State dental plan will not be affected by this change and will not have to do anything. If you are not sure if you have Fortis, contact your HR person. IF you did not receive a letter from AFT-W, you do not have Fortis. If you think you received the letter but did not read it, please contact AFT-W, Kathy Krueel at (608) 662-1444 ext. 226.