

*Science in Action:
An Electronic Bulletin of the Wisconsin Science Professionals
Volume 2, February 2006*

Science in Action provides short, timely updates on major issues affecting membership and is released on an as-needed basis. References for additional information are 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.

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Contracting-Out Defeated by Science!

For the past six months, the Department of Corrections (DOC) was under orders by the Doyle Administration and Legislature to look at ways of saving money at its Central Pharmacy, Waupun Correctional Facility. The pharmacy needs of over 25,000 inmates are served out of this single site. Already an exemplary and highly efficient facility, that was not good enough: the DOC had to explore contracting-out options. Enter WSP.

Under the leadership of VP Gary Steffen, Science began efforts to challenge the validity of contracting-out. Numerous calls and meetings led to the formation of an ad hoc group consisting of AFT-W staff reps, pharmacists, and others. The real breakthrough came in December 2005 when AFT-W President Andy Gussert brokered a meeting between Science representatives and Matt Frank, Secretary, DOC. VPs Gary Steffen and Roger Springman presented a policy fact sheet to Sec. Franks which highlighted the strengths of union pharmacists. DOC made it clear that they wanted to include Science in future discussions. Then, on January 20th, Sec. Franks announced that DOC would drop ALL attempts to contract-out pharmacists. This was a great victory for the WSP, AFT-W, and the pharmacists at DOC. Contracting-out can be fought, and won, with the right dedication and energy!! Need more information? Contact Gary Steffen at 608-264-6294.

WSP Goes to Court for its Members

Union employees can face a hostile environment in their local communities as well as in their workplaces. The Lakeland Times in Rhinelander has made it a habit to delve into the lives of DNR staff in the Rhinelander region. Last fall they sought some very specific salary and work performance information. While a substantial amount of that information was provided on non-union employees, the DNR pointed out that equivalent information on Science Professionals (and WPEC members) could NOT be given out because of privacy provisions within the contract. The DNR went out of its way to attempt a reasonable compromise, but the Lakeland Times had none of it and decided to take the DNR to court over its failure to release public employee information.

Both Science and WPEC made decisions to enter amicus briefs on behalf of the DNR's position in January. While believing in the importance of the public's right to know, we do not believe that the public has an unqualified right to obtain personal information and that it was incumbent on Science to defend contracted privacy protections. For more information on this pending case, contact Donalea Dinsmore at president@wspunion.org.

Fleet Arbitration Update

Last fall, Science began concerted efforts to collect case study information on the personal and business impacts of the State's imposed fleet guidelines. Using the SWAN network and personal appeals, nearly 40 cases were submitted for consideration and many of them were very powerful and persuasive. Not surprisingly, many members documented cases where the extreme loss of pool cars forced dramatic increases in personal car use in stark violation of original appointment letters. At the same

time, it is also very clear that fleet guidelines have profoundly affected the efficiency of employee work and led to numerous and unexpected effects on personal lives, (e.g. child care arrangements, need for another vehicle, higher insurance costs, driving “past” home to go to work for personal car pickup). Case development will continue over the next month with the expectation of a hearing this spring. Should you have a story to share with the fleet arbitration team, please contact Rick Thorbjornsen, DNR at 715-762-1358 OR Mark McCloskey, DATCP at 608-224-4532.

Your Health Insurance Under Attack: Time to Get Serious!!

That long suspected day has arrived. The Legislature has found your health care benefits and they want to take them away. Cases in point: Two bills were introduced in the current session, AB 515 and AB 341, which could seriously erode the value and type of health insurance you receive. AB 515, even though aimed at municipal employees, could eventually affect state employees. It would strip away from the Municipal Employees Relation Act (MERA) the right of municipal employees to even bargain health insurance, allowing the employer to simply say plans are “equivalent” to current benefits. AB 341 is even worse because it is targeted at state employees. It would allow the State to adopt HSAs (Health Saving Accounts) that have high-deductible plans . . . and, if you haven’t studied HSAs, they are largely a classic shell game and offer very little real insurance.

We understand the value of quality health insurance. **Yet, you should no longer believe these benefits will remain secure.** We must fight for what we believe in. With the aid of AFT-W and other organizations, a coalition is forming to help focus action and make sure an “early warning system” is established. Science must contribute to this effort too! **We need several members with keen interest in health care to join this team.** If you care about health care and can spare some time, please contact Roger Springman at 608-224-4545.

Needed: Next WSP Leadership Team!

The above articles make clear the importance of an active, aggressive Union. And, WSP, like any Union, needs a cadre of local and state representatives to help fight the good fight. One of the best ways of really making a difference on issues and for each other is by getting involved in WSP leadership.

WSP is gearing up for elections! Every March we hold elections for district representatives: odd-numbered districts in odd years and even-numbered districts in even years. Since it is 2006, we will be holding elections for districts 2, 4, 6, and 8. Each district will have an opening for one representative, except district 8 will have 2 openings. The term for a district rep is 2 years. You will be receiving a letter at the beginning of March asking for nominations and ballot work will be completed by April 15th. Additional positions are available this year at our annual convention. They are the positions of President, 1st and 2nd Vice Presidents, Membership Secretary, Recording Secretary, and Treasurer.

For position descriptions, go to the following link: www.wspunion.org (click on About WSP, Union Leadership & the Rep. Council, Elected Officers, Executive Committee). Please consider joining the WSP leadership team OR at least nominating one of your colleagues. Don’t wait for someone else to do it. **We need you NOW!!** If you have any questions, please contact one of the elections committee members: Sara Schreiber, membership@wspunion.org ; Melissa Graf, grievance@wspunion.org; or John Burger, jb.burger@hosp.wisc.edu.

2006 Professional Development Day

If you haven’t been to one of the AFT-W’s Professional Development Days, you have really missed a fabulous event. Each year they get better and bigger. They have almost reached the “sellout” point. Not only is there great instruction in the up to 20 sessions or so, but you meet your colleagues from around the AFT-W, enjoy some great food, and hear some wonderful speakers . . . this year, John Nichols will be with us again. The Pyle Center at the UW-Madison will be the host location on April 28th. Look for upcoming announcements. Questions? Contact Ron Grasshoff at 608-275-3481.

TABOR Morphs into Another Bad Idea

This is a BIG one. The Republican-controlled Legislature is still out to squeeze money out of the public sector wherever they can. After taking it on the chin with TABOR, they just introduced a “TABOR Lite” called the “Taxpayer Protection Amendment”. Same bad idea; new language!! They are going to try and get it through the Legislature this session and it is vital that we defeat it. Be alert to upcoming electronic messages about its progress and please find some time to help defeat it. Interested in helping right away? Contact Roger Springman at 608-224-4545.