



Science in Action

Wisconsin Science Professionals Local 3732

Volume 12, April 2009

WSP Board Meetings: April 24th @ 6:00 p.m., May 16th @ 8:30 a.m., September 12th @ 8:30 a.m. Note that all members are welcome to come to our board meetings. Meetings are held at the AFT-Wisconsin Headquarters at 6602 Normandy Ln in Madison.

In Today's Newsletter:

!! WSP Convention Reminder !!

Summer Baseball UPDATE Budget Update Computer Warning – Big Brother is Watching
Personal Car Use Important Upcoming Events and Dates Unions Lift Wages

****Please take note:**

If the links below do not open correctly just by clicking on them, you can *right* click on the link and select "Open Link".

Receiving E-Newsletters

It has come to our attention that some members have not been receiving the e-newsletter. If you know someone that is a member, is not getting the newsletter and wants too, please have them send an email to membership@wspunion.org.

Reminder: The WSP Convention is being held on Saturday, April 25th, starting at 8:45 am at the AFT-Wisconsin office, 6602 Normandy Lane, Madison WI.

For details go to the WSP website: <http://wi.aft.org/WSP/index.cfm>

Baseball Update – Date Change

The MADISON game date has been changed from June 27th to July 18th. The Milwaukee game will be \$30 and the other games will be \$8. Tickets go on sale today check the AFT - W website.

Navigate to the [AFT-W Homepage](#) and look for the link to the [State Employee Council baseball outings](#) Or go to the [AFT-W Events Calendar](#).

5/30	Wausau	7/25	Green Bay
6/20	Eau Claire	8/8	Lacrosse
7/18	Madison	8/15	Appleton
7/11	Beloit	8/29	Milwaukee



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Budget Update April 2009

AFT-W held several meetings in the last several weeks at state agencies. In addition the Joint Finance Committee has been holding budget hearings all over the state. The hearings were finished last Friday April 3rd. State employees represented by AFT-W are testifying at these events around the state to address their concerns about the budget and how it affects our members.

Some examples of discussion topics at the agency meetings are listed below.

The DATCP meeting discussed the clean sweep program elimination (WSP and AFT-W oppose this), the governors fleet reduction proposal (WSP and AFT-W oppose this) and the compensation for state employees being a frequent target by legislators.

The DNR meeting listed a few changes in the budget that would affect state employees.

1. Transferring administration of Wisconsin's Coastal Zone Management Program from the Department of Administration without any funding or positions to do this (AFT-W is for funding and staffing these Federally funded positions).
2. The contracting out of Timber sale Establishment on State Forests (WSP and AFT-W oppose this).
3. The transferring of funds from SEG accounts at the DNR (WSP and AFT-W oppose this).
4. Putting the selection of the DNR Secretary back under the DNR board (AFT-W and WSP support this).

The DHS meeting did not list anything other than the closing of the Southern Center. The primary discussion was about contracting out.

All of the meetings discussed giving authority to DOA to transfer any positions and the position authority from one state agency to another (AFT-W and WSP are not in favor of this), and the elimination of all positions vacant for over 12 months (AFT-W and WSP are not in favor of this). Also AFT-W has two proposals that they are asking legislators to consider in regards to contracting out:

1. Require state agencies to identify in their budget documents, which parts of their agency budgets are dedicated to contracting and how many contractors are working on this project. (We have previously discussed this idea)
2. After an agency has completed a cost benefit analysis, and they decide they want to contract the work out, require that the request to contract go through a passive review process with the Joint Finance Committee IF the contract is for more than 1 year, and the cost benefit analysis showed it was cheaper to use state employees.

One thing that is NOT in the Governor's budget is for state employees to pay more for retirement and health care. The Governor has made very public statements to that effect but there is no policy changes in his budget for this. The Group Health Board and the Employee Trust Funds board set those rates and then the state bargains those changes with the state employee unions. The Governor does not directly



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influence the setting of those rates but does determine the percentage that we will pay through the bargaining of state contracts.

We have also recently learned that the budget collections so far are on pace with the Governor's projections. This makes the prospect of any layoffs or furloughs very remote.

Finally the legislative pay raises were discussed and it was pointed out that the raises they got were the same 5+% that all state employees received so far in this biennium. Supporting a legislative freeze in pay does affect state employees because it makes it easier for legislators to cut our raises.

NOTE: One of the best places to keep track of what's going on with the budget is the WisPolitics Budget Blog at: <http://blogs.wispolitics.com/budget/>

Big Brother Is Watching:

"Your work computer belongs to the State."

A simple statement that is easy to ignore or forget. But make no mistake, the computers you use at work AND EVERYTHING ON THEM, belongs to the State of Wisconsin. This includes pictures, movies, emails (including personal ones if accessed from work), other personal documents, etc. You may say to yourself, "they'd never look at those things," but there have been recent events at several State Agencies that have served to remind employees that they absolutely WILL look at them, sort through them and will use them against you.

Remember Big Brother IS watching. If you don't want your boss to see what you're seeing then don't do it at work.

Things You Should Know About Personal Car Use for State Business

Your Personal Car and State Use: Always Seek Damage Claims

WSP is aware that many members occasionally use their personal car for state use. While your agency can compensate you for mileage if you seek approval or have a non-availability slip, they MAY NOT compensate you if damage occurs. But, the real complication for many members is personal car in the absence of insurance company notification. Fear of increasing insurance premiums keeps many members from contacting companies about state business use

This is a member-to-member communication from the Wisconsin Science Professionals to its members pursuant to Wisconsin State Statutes 11.29. Members should check workplace rules regarding political action in the workplace before responding.



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or personal car damage.

Here is a case study of a DNR member who used the State of Wisconsin Claims Board to receive compensation.

In March of 2008, a personal car sustained a serious windshield crack from a rock strike. The member had a \$500 damage deductible and her insurance agent advised her not to claim the event as rates would increase since the damage occurred in association with business use. The windshield replacement cost was \$316. Her supervisor told her to replace the windshield then seek Claims Board reimbursement. She filed papers and in November 2008 was approved for reimbursement.

Aside from normal driving hazards and accidents, WSP members can find themselves in difficult terrain where damage can occur because of trees, rocks, and debris along with paints and other chemicals. Whether you have informed your insurance company or not, we believe it vital to use the State Claims Board process to seek damage reimbursement. Your chances of success will be improved if you maintain documentation on pre and post-trip car conditions, have approvals for personal car use, and seek timely redress from the Claims Board. Personal car use largely remains a non-negotiated state benefit and the State should definitely pay when damage happens to your car!

Your Personal Car and Serious Damage/Injury Settings: Be Cautious and Sure

The above case study reviewed an option to take care of smaller damages involving personal car use for state business. But, what happens if a WSP member gets involved in a serious accident when using their personal car for State business? The simple answer is that this could create very difficult burdens on the state employee, especially if negligence or fault is confirmed. Loss of insurance could occur and the employee could be held personally responsible for certain portions of damage claims. The State Claims Board may only cover uninsured losses in certain settings.

In considering how to avoid these difficult situations, it is first important to assess your exposure level. Are you frequently using your personal car for state use? If you are, have you notified your insurance company of business use? Not telling them under a heavy use scenario adds to your risk. If you are frequently using your personal car, it is time to contact management and tell them things must change. Either the state should pay for your added insurance costs or you should be given access to a rental car or a state fleet vehicle for a project period. Occasional use for local meetings creates less exposure, but it is still wise to know the



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position of your insurance company on undeclared business use.

There is no way to know exactly what will happen in a serious incident, but the State's interest in protecting you will always be the highest when you have clear approval to use your personal car for state use. That is why it is ALWAYS wise to make sure you have a non-availability slip and/or written approvals from management to use your personal car. At the very minimum, e-mails that support personal car use should be available. Finally, don't forget to look at your position description and letter of employment to see what they say about the amount of travel and your access to a state vehicle.

If you have questions on personal car use, feel free to contact Carol McCurry, DNR at 608-267-2449 or Roger Springman, DATCP at 608-224-4545."

Other Dates and Important Events

Professional Development Day

Mark your calendars for **Friday, April 24** for the State Employees Council Professional Development Day! This popular conference features keynote speakers and workshops on a wide array of topics. Remember this is an OSER sanctioned day that allows you to get paid time off to attend, by using the Professional Development time allowed in our contract. Just follow the rules outlined in section 10/2/1 (page 53). Information about registration and agenda items can be found by clicking the link below and going to that date on the calendar.

Other Important Dates

Steward Day, April 23

WSP Convention, April 25

Public Employee Conference in Washington DC - Including a Lobby Day, June 11-14

For other AFT-Wisconsin events, meetings and AFT-Wisconsin sponsored social gatherings please see the [Event Calendar](#) on the AFT Wisconsin website:



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Unions lift wages for everyone

Another new report from the Center for Economic Policy Research (CEPR), released recently, shows that unionization significantly boosts the wages of low-wage workers. The report, *The Union Wage Advantage for Low-Wage Workers*, finds joining a union raises the wages of the typical low-wage worker by 20.6 percent nationally. Unionization also increases wages at the middle and top of the wage distribution, but the effects are lessened.

In Wisconsin, the bottom 10 percent of workers have the most to gain from unionization, earning 20.7 percent or \$1.63 per hour more than their non-unionized peers. Those right in the middle of the pay scale see their wages rise 12.1 percent or \$1.75 per hour with unionization. For high-wage workers – the top 10 percent of earners – being part of a union increases pay about 9.5 percent or \$2.65 per hour, less than half of the increase for low-wage workers. 16.7 percent of workers in Wisconsin belong to unions.

Below are links to the full report from CEPR as well and their national media release.

Link to the full report:

http://www.cepr.net/documents/publications/quantile_2008_05.pdf

Link to the national media release:

<http://www.cepr.net/index.php/press-releases/press-releases/unionization-substantially-increases-the-wages-of-low-wage-workers/>