

Professionally Speaking

NEWSLETTER of the
Wisconsin Science Professionals



Affiliated with American Federation of Teachers

AFT-Wisconsin, Wisconsin State AFL-CIO



AUGUST 2008

Know your contract — de-mystifying the transfer process

There have been many questions about the transfer process that governs positions with the State and covered by the Science Professionals contract. Some of those questions come out of a lack of knowledge by our membership and some come from confusion caused by Agency HR departments not following the rules and giving employees bad or sometimes dishonest information.

In our contract, Section 7 — Transfers, spells out the steps management must follow when offering a position for transfer. To paraphrase:

Sections 7/1/1 and 7/1/2 require the agency to use the existing transfer registry (a list of those interested in a transfer, any transfer), OR to post the position for five days. Each agency has a different place for official postings so ask your HR department.

Section 7/2 spells out the steps followed for choosing a candidate. First, section 7/2/1 says that a person asking for the transfer must be the *exact* classification as the transfer position. So allowable transfers include Chemist – Advanced to Chemist – Advanced, and Veterinarian – Senior to Veterinarian – Senior, but NOT Chemist – Advanced to Chemist – Senior, etc. If an eligible candidate applies under 7/2/1 AND they are deemed qualified, the employer must offer them the position.

If no one is selected under 7/2/1 then section 7/2/2 requires a second posting and opens the process up to those within the bargaining unit (i.e., any Science Professional), in the same agency or university campus and in the same *pay range*. For most of WSP this means pay range 15-03, which includes all non-pharmacist titles and those that are not in the pay progression series. Employees in this group have five days to express their interest and formally ask for the transfer.

If no one is selected under 7/2/1 and 7/2/2 then section 7/2/4 allows the position to be opened up to anyone (not just WSP) in a counterpart pay range. In our case this includes our front line managers among others. The next

step 7/2/5 is opening recruitment up to anyone in the same or a *higher* pay range. After that it would probably be advertised.

Note that if a candidate applies and is not selected, they can demand to know the reason *in writing*. Also, if there are two or more people who are judged equally qualified the more senior employee shall be offered the position. Lastly if a transfer candidate is not chosen and they were the only candidate to make a request, they can file a grievance. However, if another candidate from a transfer list was chosen, the non-selection cannot be grieved.

2007 – 2009 WSP bargaining agreement copies

We will be changing the way we deal with bound printed contracts once the 2007-2009 agreement is finalized. In the past, many members have told us that they don't want or need a printed copy if they have web access to it. Rest assured, we will still provide printed copies to those members who want one! Sometime after the contract becomes final, look for a survey asking who would like a printed copy. We will print the appropriate number of copies and mail them out. Please note that this agreement does not cover WSP members at the UW Hospital, who should have copies of their own recent agreement.

The contract will be posted on the union's website and the site of the Office of State Employment Relations. Copies can be printed from either site, but be aware that the agreement is about 150 pages. Currently the version of the contract that went to the legislature can be viewed here: <http://oscer.state.wi.us/docview.asp?docid=6774>. The only changes to the final version would be typographical.

Note that OSER controls the timing of this printing far more than the Union and as of the end of June has not finished its process yet.

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

by Gary Steffen

State health care costs that all state employees should be aware of

Health care costs for state employees have been rising the past several years. Based upon beliefs heard at a meeting with

Office of State Employee Relations (OSER) management late last year, that trend will continue. We hear it many times from our "friends" at WMC (Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce) and their politicians that state employees have "Cadillac" benefits. Is there a point when things could change radically in terms of state employees paying even more of their health insurance costs? That point is believed to be when state employee health care costs the State one billion dollars a year.

Fortunately we have not reached that point yet, so we have a few years before that does happen. When it does, I would expect that all state



employees would pay 20% of the monthly health care costs. When the increases for health care take effect next year we will be paying 5 to 6% of the

costs. This is still below the level that other states pay for health care. In New York and California, state employees pay 20% of the costs. I had a conversation with the next President of the Public Employee Federation for New York a few months ago. He said that state employees there feel that this has

reduced the increases in costs since they started paying that much. I would not be surprised that Wisconsin state employees would be paying 20% of these costs within the next 6 years.

The spinoffs of this will affect us all. This change will force many state employees to delay retirement and if they do retire, to cut back on expensive activities. One thing that is for certain

is that WSP would not accept a contract with the state that would have a radical increase in health care costs without some increases in compensation that would take the sting out of the increase. This is a topic that all state employees will be hearing more about in the future.

Events

2008

Sept. 6 WSP Rep Council Meeting, AFT-Wisconsin, Madison

Oct. 29-31 AFT-Wisconsin Convention, Wyndham Milwaukee Airport Hotel, Milwaukee

*Dues News #1***Partial dues rebate**

At the recent Wisconsin Science Professionals (WSP) convention, an amendment was made to the constitution regarding the partial dues rebate, previously called the part time dues rebate. Until 2007, members could only request the dues rebate if they worked 0.5 FTE or less AND earned less than a specified amount.

Delegates to the 2007 convention approved an amendment to change the wording for the partial dues rebate to remove the 0.5 or less FTE requirement, and use only the annual gross wages as the criteria for the rebate. The annual gross wages amount was set at \$32,000.

At the fall 2007 American Federation of Teachers-Wisconsin (AFT-W) convention, a constitutional amendment changed the wording for part-time per caps to "earning less than \$34,000". WSP pays per caps to our affiliate AFT-W, based the wording in their constitution. To allow for

consistency between the organizations and to benefit our members, WSP delegates amended our constitution at the 2008 convention.

Effective April 27th, 2008, WSP members earning less than \$34,000 in annual gross wages at their state employment position are eligible for the partial dues rebate.

The rebate is based on the previous year per cap amounts paid to AFT-W and American Federation of Teachers-National (AFT-N). The currently rebate is \$17.91/month (\$53.72/qtr), paid quarterly at the end of the quarter.

How do you get the partial dues rebate? It's easy! Email the treasurer at treasurer@wspunion.org and request to be added to the partial dues rebate recipients. The treasurer will verify your annual gross wages and notify you of when to expect the rebate. Each quarter wages will be verified to make sure you are still eligible.

If you are receiving a rebate, you are required to notify the treasurer of a

change in your FTE and/or hourly wage immediately after the change. If you fail to notify the treasurer of a change and the change made you ineligible for the partial dues rebate, you will be required to repay the amount of rebate paid in error.

*Dues News #2***Increase in per capita payments to AFT-National**

The American Federation of Teachers-National (AFT-N) convention will be held this summer in Chicago. WSP will be sending several delegates and we hope to make our voice heard, especially on one important vote. This year, as every year, there is a proposal to increase per capita payments paid by locals affiliated with AFT-N (i.e., the national organization part of our dues).

WSP objects strongly to such an increase as we must pass those increases down to our members by raising the dues deduction. There is no stated reason for the increase and WSP does not support any increase in per capita payments at this time. Everyone has to tighten their belts as the economy experiences a "correction."

At this time, WSP will not support a vote to raise dues. It is time to step back and reprioritize using the existing funds and income. It is misguided to expect members to pay an increase in dues when the raise in the cost of living is causing everyone to reconsider every expense and wages are not keeping up with inflation.

Help your union

The table below lists the current WSP leadership. Please note: there are currently five vacancies – that's where you come in! Would you like to fill one? If so, contact a current representative or email president@wspunion.org. Terms are two years. However, in the odd numbered districts one year of the term has already been completed. Approximately 5 board meetings are held throughout the year on Saturdays with travel, meals and lodging paid.

Executive Committee

President: Gary Steffen – DNR

1st Vice Pres: Lisa Treffinger – DOJ

2nd Vice Pres: Matt Roach - UW

Treasurer: Brooke Ludwig – DNR

Membership Secretary: Sara

Schreiber- DOJ

Recording Secretary: Chiara

Wuensh – DOJ

Grievance Chair: Carol McCurry - DNR

Newsletter Editor: Donalea Dinsmore - DNR

Representative Council

District 1: Constantine Tsoris, Ron Grasshof, Percy Mather, Cheryl Laatsch, 2 Vacancies

District 2: Sandy Koresch – DOJ, Karla Leithoff- DOT

District 3: Vacant (contact District 2)

District 4: Vacant (contact District 6)

District 5: Rick Thorbjornsen – DNR

District 6: Ron Schneider – DNR

District 7: Vacant (contact District 5)

District 8 UW Hospital: Dave

Vandermeuse – UWHCA

AFT WI VP: John Burger - UWHCA

(CL)apping you on the back

by John Burger

Although rarely used, the Catastrophic Leave (CL) provision in our contracts is a great safety net that members feel good about having it needs to be used. When WSP becomes aware that a member with a catastrophic situation that is on an unpaid leave of absence that is creating a financial hardship, a Union committee sends out a request for those that are able to donate annual leave to help the member get through this rough time in their lives.

Because of a member's husband's fight with cancer over the last three years, District 8 has had to put a magnifier over the contract language for CL and actually changed the definitions and terms in the contract. The long-standing contract language and CL descriptions did not consider the intermittent nature and care needed for cancer patients. By working with the UW Hospital management, Human Resources, Payroll, and the Classification and Compensation Departments, WSP was able to provide our member the time she needed to care for, and in the end, say good-bye to her partner in life without having to worry about whether the house would be repossessed or if there was going to be enough gas in the car to get to the hospital.

Members' very generous donations of annual leave, the hard work and dedication shown by the volunteers on the committee, the management and HR employees that never stopped trying to ensure that the person in need was taken care of is heartwarming and illustrates that the UWHC truly is the Employer of Choice.

Getting to know you!

by John Burger

This past April, we were able to recognize 150 hard working WSP professionals as part of a joint effort to build public awareness of our members and the jobs they do as part of National Medical Laboratory Professionals Week (NMLPW). Working with the UW Hospital and Clinics, The UW Hospital Clinical Laboratories, WPEC, WSEU and AFT-Wisconsin 315 Clinical Laboratory professionals representing three labor Unions got their name in the Sunday edition of the Wisconsin State Journal. This joint effort with the UW Hospital and Clinics is the first time that UW Laboratory professionals were recognized for their hard work and dedication to their Patients and Professions. We hope that future joint activities can be organized to build the Labor relations and to demonstrate why UWHC is a great employer.

Do you like politics?

If you do there is an opportunity to get involved in the AFT-Wisconsin COPE committee (Committee on Political Education). This committee always has a need for interested volunteers and specifically those concerned with issues important to state employees. Meetings are held throughout the state to interview candidates for office and decide what issues to support politically. Regardless of where you fall on the spectrum, all you really need is an interest. If you feel your voice isn't heard now's your chance. If you are interested please send an email to president@wspunion.org.

Are the non-reps getting more?

There have been rumors floating that the non-reps still got the 2% raise in July 2008 while we settled for 1%. This is false. When the legislature voted on our contracts, they also voted on an updated plan for the non-represented employees to change their wage adjustments to the same 2%, 1%, and 2% that the unions negotiated so non-reps they will NOT be getting more than we will. It should also be noted that while employees represented by unions will be receiving back pay all the way back to July 2008, the non-reps did not see their 2% start until December 9th, 2007 – after the budget was passed.

Contracting out proposal returns

Two years ago the Department of Corrections (DOC) turned down a biennial budget proposal to contract out Pharmacist positions. In the current biennial budget proposal there is another requirement that the Department of Health and Family Services put out a RFP to contract out it's Pharmacists. Several meetings with DHFS leaders by WSP and AFT-W have been held since this item came out in the budget. The message in those meetings has been clear; that DHFS should follow the law and put out the RFP but not accept the bids.

This situation has many parallels with two years ago. State employees do the job at a lower rate of pay than contractors. State employees do a complete job and do not just fill prescriptions. State employees are accountable for the job they do. Contract Pharmacists that work at DOC are constantly changing and because of it require constant training. The contractors do not do the whole job that state employees do. Essentially the contractors are no bargain and open the state up to an increased risk of lawsuit due to less accountability.

What makes no sense is, with the state budget shortfall, that the legislature would continue to choose costly contractors rather than hire state employees.

It will be early next year before we find out when the RFP will be put out. WSP leaders will be watching the process closely to insure that it is followed and that there is no outside pressure to accept a bid that is a lowball contract or one that costs more than state employees.

Rep. Jim Kreuser is the source of both of these budget items. Rep. Kreuser received campaign contributions from at least one company that provides contract Pharmacists to the state. Mr. Kreuser is leaving the Assembly to become the Kenosha County Executive. The leadership of WSP wish him well in his new endeavor.

Benefits for AFT members

Several benefits are available for AFT members. One of the benefits is discounts at ten Hotel chains. Those ten are (with their toll free numbers):

AmeriHost Inn	800/996-2087
Days Inn	800/268-2195
Howard Johnson	800/769-0939
Knights Inn.....	800/682-1071
Ramada	800/462-8035
Super 8 Motel	800/889-9706
Travelodge	800/545-5545
Wingate Inn	877/202-8814
Wyndham Hotel & Resorts	866/854-1604
Baymont Inn	800/980-1679

To make reservations by phone, call 877/670-7088 or use the toll-free number for the hotel chain listed below. Identify yourself as an AFT member and mention your AFT + ID# to the operator: 20952.

How much of a discount? Save 10 percent off the “Best Available Rate” at thousands of participating hotel locations throughout the world! “Best available rate” is defined as the lowest rate publicly available to consumers on the Internet.

Advance reservations are required. Offer subject to availability at participating locations and some blackout dates may apply. Offer void where prohibited by law and has no cash value. Discount is 10 percent off and cannot be combined with any other discounts, offers or special promotions.

To research other discounts of AFT membership go to <http://www.aft.org/aftplus/index.htm> or to the Members Benefit portion of the WSP web page.



Ron Grasshoff receives the 2008 Posekany Award

The DNR Office of Energy and Environmental Analysis (OEAA) has awarded the "Lewis A. Posekany Award" for Outstanding Achievement to South Central Region environmental analysis and review specialist **Ron Grasshoff**. Grasshoff has been in the region for 18 years, joining the OEAA within the Division of Enforcement in 1999.

The Posekany Award is dedicated to the memory of Lew Posekany, who retired in 1984 after 45 years of state service and passed away in late 2004. He was responsible for the formation of the Environmental Analysis program; much of the early Water Regulation and Zoning program development; and the concepts within DNR's cooperative agreement with the State Department of Transportation (DOT).

Following are highlights from the nomination document for the Posekany Award:

- Grasshoff's resource ethic is perhaps best exemplified by his efforts on the U.S. Highway 151 project, a section of which experienced the largest rock cuts on a single DOT project. Eleven million cubic yards of dirt were moved, enough to fill Lambeau Field close to

20 times. Grasshoff was able to get DOT to lessen the cut on one bluff by 150 feet. In addition, he convinced DOT to re-meander Blockhouse Creek into a more natural channel flow, making it a highly used fishing spot for local anglers.

- Grasshoff's depth of knowledge and insightful perspective make him a good role model. He focuses on the big picture, often thinking of innovative and creative approaches, with an exceptional understanding of the "people" side of our work.

- Grasshoff has a passion for wetlands.
- Grasshoff enjoys teaching and isn't afraid to challenge common thought and practices.

- Grasshoff spends a majority of his time in planning and design, where DNR can most influence a transportation project's permanent impacts on the natural resources.

- Grasshoff has shown exemplary internal/external cooperation through his participation on the Wisconsin Environmental Protection Act change team and the DOT mitigation review team.

"The department, South Central Region, the program and the citizens of Wisconsin are fortunate to have the



Division of Enforcement administrator Susan Crawford and Lew Posekany, Jr. were on hand to present the 2008 Posekany Award to SCR's Ron Grasshoff. WDNR Photo.

extensive knowledge and skills of Ron Grasshoff," said Dave Siebert, director of the Office of Energy and Environmental Analysis.

Ron is a long time union activist and has held a variety of positions within the union.

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