

# Professionally Speaking

NEWSLETTER of the  
Wisconsin Science Professionals



Affiliated with American Federation of Teachers

AFT-Wisconsin, Wisconsin State AFL-CIO

JULY 2006

## Welcome new WSP Executive Committee!

by Marie Stewart

WSP would like to welcome our new and continuing officers. Officers are elected for a two-year term at the April annual WSP Convention.

Our newly elected officers are:

- **President:** Gary Steffen (DNR)
- **1st Vice President:** Lisa Treffinger (DOJ)
- **2nd Vice President:** Ron Grasshoff (DNR)
- **Membership Secretary:** Sara Schreiber (DOJ)
- **Recording Secretary:** Chiara Wuensch (DOJ)
- **Treasurer:** Brooke Ludwig (DNR)

Lisa was originally elected at the Convention to be 2nd Vice President, however, at the June 10 WSP Representative Council meeting she was appointed to be 1st Vice President (replacing Roger Springman who is stepping down) and Ron Grasshoff (DNR – not pictured) was appointed to be 2nd Vice President.

We would also like to THANK our outgoing officers for all their time and efforts on our behalf, over the past two – or more – years: Donalea Dinsmore, President; Alfredo Sotomayor, Recording Secretary; and Roger Springman, 1st Vice President. All three did an excellent job on behalf of our members in very trying times and we want them to know that it was appreciated.



(L-R) Lisa Treffinger, 1st Vice President; Chiara Wuensch, Recording Secretary; Gary Steffen, President; Sara Schreiber, Membership Secretary; Roger Springman, departing 1st Vice President; and Brooke Ludwig, continuing Treasurer. Photo courtesy of Percy Mather (DNR).



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### Pay now or pay MORE later!

Remember, you may need to reevaluate your W-4 Withholding Allowance as a result of the contract increases that became effective on June 25<sup>th</sup>.

## Events

### 2006

- July 18-22 ..... AFT National Convention, Boston Convention & Exhibition Center, Boston, MA
- July 30-Aug. 3 ... Great Lakes Union Leadership Institute, Lake Lawn Resort and Spa, Delavan, WI
- Sept. 15-16 ..... AFT-Wisconsin Annual Fall Leadership Conference, Ramada Inn Convention Center, Eau Claire, WI
- Sept. 23 ..... WSP Rep Council Meeting, Madison, WI
- Oct. 25-27 ..... AFT-Wisconsin 75th Annual Convention, Paper Valley Hotel, Appleton, WI

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# PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

by Gary Steffen

For 20 years as a nonmember I was not always happy with the Wisconsin Science Professionals. I knew they were all volunteers and were taking time away from other personal activities to represent all Science Professionals. However, I did not join until I had to. These volunteers were there when I needed them. I will need them to be there as long as I am a state employee. Once I became a member I was determined to make some changes and I became a district representative. From there I moved into the leadership of the union. During this time, state employees have faced hostility that has not occurred in public service in over 40 years.



State government has changed in the past 25 years, and the last 4 years, in particular, have turned darker for state employees. In the past four years there have been too many attacks on public servants. First there was the mean-spirited threat to cancel agreements made between the state and state employee unions. Then there was the pledge by the current governor to cut the number of state employees. In several cases the plan was to then contract-out the work performed by the laid-off employees at an increased cost to the citizens of the state. Finally there was the 2003-2005 contract which gave Science Professionals barely more than 1% over two years.

Thankfully WSP and our state affiliate AFT-WI, reacted positively to save positions marked for deletion and, in 2005, helped to get one of the best market adjustments in over 20 years for the majority of the people we represent. There were eight classifications that

were left out of those market increases. The groundwork has already been laid to rectify this. I have several goals for the next two years. The first is to get the eight classifications that were left out of market adjustments in the recent contract a much deserved market adjustment. The second involves strengthening this union to prepare to defend against further attacks on public service and to fight all contracting-out of work performed by state employees. Make no mistake, WSP and AFT-WI are the only organizations that will stand up for you when the attacks on state employees occur. That is the reason everyone we represent should sign a membership card and join WSP. We will need the help of every state employee in the coming years.

# 2005 Retrospective at the WSP Annual Convention

by Donnalea Dinsmore, former WSP President

When I think over the events of last year, the word “intense” comes to mind. We had settled our 2003-05 contract but still had a dispute over implementing the dental insurance. Then came contract settlements for other unions so we were concerned about equity for health insurance and how the “me too” clause in our contract would be implemented. Add to this: fleet car reductions; significant efforts to save positions in



the biennial budget; “Travelgate” and associated changes in travel policies; renewed efforts to save pharmacist jobs; implementing the new dental plan; externals challenging the

privacy rights within our contract; bargaining for the 2005-07 contract; grievances on professional time, transfer rights and wrongful termination; and several incidents involving threatening behavior and you have a very busy year ... but pretty typical of the last few years.

All of this comes at a time when the union is in transition. The activists that started our union or sustained it through the early years are either retiring or are stepping back from union activities. Many of the newer activists, me included, don't know WSP's history or the trials it's weathered. Some of us don't come from union families. The only impressions we may have of unions are what comes through the media: stories of Jimmy Hoffa and corruption of power, teacher's strikes, and days off school. We don't know what it means to be part of a union, much less part of a “union of professionals.” I personally have really wrestled to understand how being part of a professional union distinguishes us. I'm not always sure how to tell our story about why we exist

and what we stand for. In the membership surveys and focus groups that AFT conducted for us in 2005, we learned that many of our members are wrestling with these issues. Now as much as ever, we need to strengthen the union. Our members need to know what WSP stands for. Here are some of my thoughts about what we stand for.

• **Treatment as professionals** —

Our jobs require that we exercise professional judgment. Micromanagement is offensive. We do what it takes to get the job done and in return we expect not to be taken advantage of. Schedule flexibility and the ability to use professional time are important aspects of our job. Opportunities for professional development are important to retaining the skills of our discipline.

• **Integrity, both personal and professional** — We believe in high standards of conduct and ethics. Ethical conduct should not be punitive or sacrifice common sense. As professionals, we don't want to be a “rubber stamps” or be asked to violate the principles of our profession.

• **Fair and equitable treatment** — Our compensation plans should be fair and reflect the value of the services we provide. There should not be an economic penalty for working in the public sector. Work rules need to be reasonable. Supervisors need to do their jobs, and if someone behaves inappropriately, we support consequences that are appropriate for the behavior. Discipline happens. When it does, it should be fair, appropriate, and evenly applied.



Donalea is pictured here with our Convention guest speaker, Nino Amato, who spoke about the future of the University of Wisconsin. Photo courtesy of Percy Mather (DNR).

• **Value of public service** — As public servants, we act in the interest of the public and the laws enacted on their behalf. Sometimes the private sector's motive to make a profit leads to short-cuts and actions directed at making money rather than the public interest. Accountability is intrinsic to what we do. Public employees don't walk away once a job is complete. We stick around to pick up the pieces when things don't go as planned or desired.

• **Good governance** — We want government systems that are efficient and effective. As taxpayers, we don't want to see tax dollars wasted. There are times when it makes sense to contract for services, but wholesale privatization costs more tax dollars without the accountability that public employees provide. Decision-makers need to look at the big picture and the long-term good. They need to understand what Science Professionals do and how it benefits the State and it's citizens. WSP and its members need to continue to play a role in communicating that to them.

One of our priorities needs to be communicating the WSP story and the principles for which we stand. I invite you to participate in that goal.



# A letter from the state veterinarians

*Editors Note: We don't normally publish letters we receive in our newsletter, however, we wanted to make an exception in this case because the letter below gives the membership a good sense of what our union gets done "behind the scenes." The letter is unedited.*

May 9, 2006

Dear Ken Olsen and Bargaining Team:

On behalf of all the Wisconsin Science Professional (WSP) veterinarians we would like to thank you and the WSP Bargaining Team for assisting us in addressing our salary deficiencies. We recognize that WSP has numerous requests from its members to address salary issues, and we appreciate the effort applied to our issue over the last two budget periods.

We feel that WSP has greatly helped veterinarians make progress toward obtaining fair market salaries. Partnering with WSP was one of the key reasons we were successful. We encourage other groups that feel they are similarly affected by salary deficiencies to partner with WSP to improve their salaries.

When we began in 2000, the general sentiment was that the union could do nothing to aid us in our pursuit of fair market salaries for veterinarians, and most expected us to be unsuccessful once again. Despite the sense that our efforts would be futile, in 2000 two of us decided to work on our salary issue. We began by working with the WSP and our agency, and found that veterinarians had not had a market review since 1990.

It was immediately evident that WSP was willing to work with us. It was also clear that we needed to conduct the information gathering to support our case. This was time-consuming and very challenging, but we realized that this was our responsibility.

In 2001 Marie Stewart, past President of WSP, provided guid-

ance on what information would be needed for us to successfully present our case. Our group wished to be reclassified to the next highest salary category. After months collecting salary information from neighboring states and other sectors that employ veterinarians we had current comprehensive data to support that WSP veterinarians were grossly under-paid. Next we created a PowerPoint presentation to help communicate our issues and our suggested remedies for the veterinary salary deficiencies. Marie Stewart provided us with the opportunity to give our presentation to a meeting of WSP and the Office of State Employment Relations (OSER) in late 2001. She subsequently shared copies of our PowerPoint presentation to others involved in the bargaining process, including key legislators. We greatly appreciated all of her efforts.

In late 2002 the 2001-2003 contract agreement was reached, and it included a significant market adjustment for veterinarians. We had learned that, while not easy, progress could be made, but only through close partnership with WSP.

Our current WSP President, Donalea Densmore along with the Bargaining Team continued to partner with us as we updated salary comparisons to strengthen our case for the 2005-2007 contract. They were able to help us once again, in good part because we worked closely with them by providing updated comparative salary information and they effectively used the information we provided.

Closer to home, Roger Springman our Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection WSP representative was of invaluable assistance in helping us understand the bargaining process and the critical timelines for providing information and communication with upper levels of WSP.

We are very grateful to you and all of the WSP individuals who worked to help us. We hope other groups learn from our experience and recognize that progress can be made through effective partnership with WSP.

Here is a look at the type of information we assembled and presented to support our case:

## **Salary comparisons:**

We showed that mean professional income for our veterinarians lagged \$23,000 behind veterinarians in the private sector. We also showed that our DATCP field veterinarians were paid \$30,000 less than federal veterinarians working in Wisconsin with essentially the same duties.

## **Roles and responsibilities:**

We explained how qualified veterinarians for the state must be highly trained and experienced, and that the knowledge needed far exceeded the general veterinary practitioner. We discussed Mad Cow Disease, Foot and Mouth Disease, Avian Influenza and other animal diseases that affect not only animals, but also affect the public's health as well.

## **Retention and recruitment:**

While we were not able to get veterinary salaries up to where they need to be, we were able to improve them significantly in difficult times. We are confident that our collective efforts will help Wisconsin avoid an exodus of qualified veterinarians dedicated to animal health issues. It is important to keep in mind that salary issues will not go away if the State fails to understand the role of regulatory veterinarians in protecting the public food supply. These veterinarians will support the programs that protect the health and safety of Wisconsin in the coming years. We look forward to continued work with all involved with this issue to achieve a long-term equitable solution.

We look forward to continued successful partnership with WSP and our fellow union members.

Sincerely,

Dr. Gerald Ruch (DATCP) and  
Dr. Myron Kebus (DATCP)

## SHORT TAKES

by Shirley Haidinger

### Will your vote count?

Some Wisconsin counties and municipalities are considering the purchase of Diebold touch-screen voting machines to meet new federal handicapped accessibility requirements even though they do not meet current national standards for security. Articles in several publications, including Newsweek and the New York Times, have questioned the trustworthiness of electronic touch-screen voting and have reported on vulnerabilities in the Diebold machines. Experts are calling them the most serious voting-machine flaws ever documented.

Twelve counties that are considering buying Diebold equipment are Chippewa, Dodge, Door, Green, Kenosha, Ozaukee, St. Croix, Sauk, Vilas, Walworth, Washington, and



Winnebago. If you live in one of these counties you may want to contact your county and municipal officials and ask them why they would buy voting

equipment that is vulnerable to tampering. For more information on voting machine problems check out these web sites: [www.votetrustusa.org](http://www.votetrustusa.org), [www.verifiedvoting.org](http://www.verifiedvoting.org), and [www.blackboxvoting.org](http://www.blackboxvoting.org).

### Right to work for less battles loom

Kentucky working families are mobilizing to defeat right to work for less legislation for the fourth time in four legislative sessions. The proposed legislation (H.B. 38) is backed by Gov. Ernie Fletcher (R), anti-worker state legislators and Big Business. They claim the legislation prevents workers who don't want to join a union from being forced to do so. But under federal law, no one can be required to join a union. The bill would ban employers and employees from agreeing that nonmembers should pay their share of the costs of representing them and negotiating on their behalf. Workers in states with so-called right to work laws have a consistently lower quality

of life than those in other states — lower wages, higher poverty, less access to health care — according to data from the U.S. Department of Labor and the U.S. Census Bureau. Working families and their unions also are gearing up to fight right to work for less battles in Indiana, Missouri and New Hampshire. For more information, visit <http://www.unionvoice.org/ct/J71g1a41CPgf/>.

### Make your voice heard

There's an easy way to make your voice heard on important policy issues.

Become a member of the AFT e-Activist Network and offer your opinion to decision-makers on key issues. By completing your profile on the e-Activist sign-up page, you will become part of the AFT's successful grassroots lobbying program.

AFT has added an incentive for you to join the e-Activist Network. Completing or updating your profile will automatically enter you into a drawing for an iPod nano or several other AFT prizes. Sign up at:

<http://www.unionvoice.org/aftactivist/join.html?rk=-71YXC11xSCp>.

### The weekly spin

The Weekly Spin of PR Watch features selected news summaries with links to further information about media, political spin, and propaganda. It's emailed free each Wednesday to subscribers. If you'd like to receive The Weekly Spin, sign up at: [http://www.prwatch.org/cmd/subscribe\\_sotd.html](http://www.prwatch.org/cmd/subscribe_sotd.html).

### This is science idol

On issues from air quality to global warming, government science is being censored, manipulated, and distorted on an unprecedented scale.



Science should be free from political interference! Now here's your chance to show off your artistic and comedic talents in support of independent science — it's said that a picture is worth a thousand words, but what about an editorial cartoon?



The Union of Concerned Scientists is hosting a scientific integrity editorial cartoon contest. They're looking for your creative take on the issue of political interference in science. Submit one-panel or multi-panel, print cartoons that address the misuse of science on a specific issue or in general. **Entries are due by July 31, 2006.** For details on how to enter, links to professional cartoons, and the most recent news about this issue go to [http://www.ucsusa.org/scientific\\_integrity/science\\_idol/](http://www.ucsusa.org/scientific_integrity/science_idol/).

### Senate rejects bid to limit spending, revenue growth

Members of the Wisconsin Senate stood up for good government when they rejected a proposed constitutional amendment that would incrementally decrease public services. The proposal, the so-called Taxpayer Protection Amendment (TPA), was a repackaged version of Colorado's Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR). Coloradans voted to suspend TABOR in November 2005 due to the measure's deleterious effect on the availability of public services. These proposals reduce the size of government by limiting the growth of state and local revenues or expenditures to restrictive formulas. The Senate's May 4 defeat of the proposal came after intense opposition to TPA by citizens,



elected officials, and more than 100 Wisconsin associations and organizations, including AFT-Wisconsin. AFT-W for more than two years has been aggressively educating members about TABOR's effects on Colorado's public services, ranging from social service programs to higher education. The member mobilization and education program to defeat TPA included educational forums in key districts and mailings. The union used auto-call technology to alert members about the bill and ask them to contact their elected officials. AFT-W also sent electronic messages to members at critical times during the legislative debate.

# Update those PDs!

by Marie Stewart

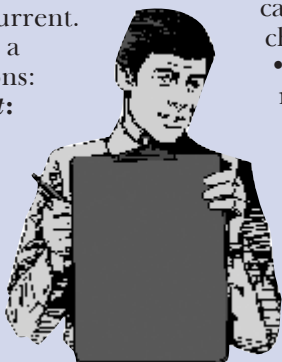
Most of us rarely think about our “official” position description (PD) unless we are trying to get reclassified to a higher classification. What we should remember is that our official PD can impact us in a number of ways and we should try to make sure that we look at them periodically (at least annually) and keep them current.

Why, you say? There are a number of important reasons:

- **Layoffs and reinstatement:**

Layoff groups, under the WSP contract, are determined by classification which includes whether you are in the “pay progression,” a senior or an advanced level. If your PD is out-of-date, you could be misclassified and end up in a layoff group when, in reality, you belong in a different level. If you ever get laid off, your reinstatement rights will be back to the classification that you were in at the time of layoff or to a classification you were previously qualified in.

- **Reclassification to a higher class:** A position is eligible to be reclassified to a higher level if the higher class specifications can be met. Typically a



reclass to a higher level is based on a **logical and gradual change to the duties or responsibilities of a position.**

Documentation that the additional duties have been performed for at least six months is typically required. Other than whatever time-accounting form your agency may use, another way of documenting this is by periodically updating your PD so that you can show the progression of the changes in your duties.

- **Reallocation:** One of the reasons that this may occur is if it is determined that the previous assignment of your position was in error (your position was misclassified to begin with). A determination that there is a **significant** change to the job duties could result in, not only an employee being reallocated to a totally

different classification (and possibly pay range), but could also force them to have to compete for their position. This has happened periodically when an agency or a program is reorganized and significant job description changes are made. One way to prevent these types of significant changes is to make sure your PD is accurate and that you are in the proper classification and pay range and meet the class specifications

for your classification (available on the OSER web site).

- **New contracts and pay increases:** In the last 8-10 years our pay increases in the new contracts with the State have been partially based on market rates for various classifications (professions). As evidenced in the new 2005-07 contract, we were unable to get agreement for market increases for some of our classifications (Chemists, for example). If you happen to have a position that could legitimately meet the specs for two different classifications (a Chemist or a Waste Management Specialist, for example) having been in the Waste Management classification would have resulted in your receiving the new market increases.

Of course nobody has a crystal ball and **we aren't recommending** that you try to decide what classifications might or might not get a market increase in the future and, therefore, try to reclassify your position accordingly. **We are recommending** that you evaluate your PD and your class specifications and make sure you are up-to-date and that the percentages for each duty are accurate. It's the best way to protect yourself from major changes and to document your eligibility for reclassifications and possible contract raises in the future.

## Wisconsin Science Professionals

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