

Professionally Speaking

NEWSLETTER of the
Wisconsin Science Professionals



Affiliated with American Federation of Teachers

AFT-Wisconsin, Wisconsin State AFL-CIO



DECEMBER 2005

Military leave, dues suspension and update on dues increase

by Brook Ludwig

This is a good news/ bad news article. First the good news.

The Representative Council of Wisconsin Science Professionals (WSP) has voted to suspend dues for employees represented by WSP while on military duty. While on active military duty, no dues will be taken from paychecks as a show of support to the employee. This will automatically be done by the agencies dependent on the leave status of the employee. If you believe you should have dues suspended but they have not been, please contact your agency to verify your status. You may contact the WSP treasurer at Treasurer@wspunion.org if you need more information.

Now for the bad news.

There will be a dues increase starting January 2006. This is unpleasant news to have to share with our members. This increase is not for WSP local dues but is passed on to us from our state and national affiliates.

In January of 2005, AFL-CIO increased dues by \$0.15 per member. WSP did not add this increase to the members dues until this Fall. The Union treasury, therefore, covered the extra dues for most of the past year. In September of this year, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT national) increased dues by \$0.50 per member. WSP's treasury has also been covering that increase and will continue to until the end of the year. In January 2006, AFL-CIO will increase dues another \$0.05 per member. These increases have been voted on at national conventions by all the delegates sent from the locals of the AFT and AFL-CIO.

In addition, American Federation of Teachers-Wisconsin (AFT-W) will increase their dues by \$0.25. This was voted on at the convention this past October. WSP voted against the increase and spoke on the voting floor to encourage other locals to vote against it as well. The increase passed by a narrow margin. **The**

total increase in dues in January, therefore, will be \$0.50 AFT, \$0.05 AFL-CIO, and \$0.25 for AFT-W for a total of \$0.80 a month or \$0.40 per pay check. Currently WSP receives less than \$3.00 of the \$18.50 collected for your dues every pay period. We have not raised our Local's portion of the total dues for several years now. WSP is required to pay the increases and our constitution requires us to pass these increases on to our members. WSP has tried to soften the impact by delaying dues increases and trying to consolidate the increases. While we can

cover small increases for short periods of time, to remain operating in the black and be in compliance with our constitution we must pass the dues along.

WSP has strongly supported accountability of the affiliates for the increase in dues. While the cost of doing business increases, they still need to set priorities and make sure that our dues money will be used appropriately. WSP is actively participating in a review, of the dues structure within AFT-W locals that is being conducted by AFT-W. The first step is completing a dues survey, sent by the newly created AFT-W dues review committee, to the locals. After the surveys are collected, the committee will compile and evaluate the results to determine the next steps in the process.

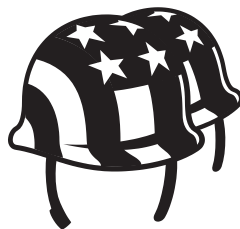
AFT-W has a new president who has made this issue primary in what well may be a restructuring of how they do business. WSP has representatives on the dues review committee. It is unknown what the outcome of this will be but we do not support regular increases in dues. Meanwhile, WSP has not increased our local's dues and has not for over five years. We carefully manage our budget and have a commitment to keep members dues as low as possible.

You may contact the WSP treasurer at Treasurer@wspunion.org if you would like more information about the dues increases or the dues review committee.



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Obfuscation and real costs at the Dept. of Corrections

by Gary Steffen

The Biennial budget process produced some surprises. The Joint Committee on Finance put together a budget that authorized a study for contracting-out the pharmacy services at one correctional institution. The study is the result of Governor Doyle's campaign promise to cut the state workforce to 1986 levels. Pharmacists were targeted because they are paid at a higher rate than other state employees; however, they are greatly underpaid in comparison to Pharmacists in the private sector. DOC has recently tried to hire Pharmacists but no candidates would accept a position that paid significantly lower than the private sector. So, rather than increase the entry wage rate for State employee Pharmacy positions, DOC started contracting-out for pharmacy services and paid contractors \$76/hour. This is almost **\$40/hour more** than State employee Pharmacists are paid. It became an issue that was brought to the attention of the Legislature.

The Pharmacists at DOC are dedicated public servants who take great pride in the job they do. They instituted many changes that saved the state over \$200,000. Their reward was a budget from the Governor's office that



proposed contracting-out of all health care positions at DOC. Joint Finance hearings were well attended by DOC employees who testified about the excessive spending for contractors. The budget proposed by the Legislature included contracting-out at one DOC facility along with a cost effectiveness study to settle the issue. A veto by the Governor, however, changed the wording from contracting-out at one institution to contracting-out at all of them. Contracting-out of these services will be continued if the study shows that it has reduced the cost of supplying and distributing pharmaceutical services within DOC.

The secretary of the Department of Corrections, Matt Frank, oversaw the development of the Request for Proposal (RFP) for the contracted pharmacy services after the budget passed. In a letter to the AFT Mr. Frank stated that "It is very important to note that we are simply gathering information on these options at the present time." It is interesting to note, however, that the RFP has an award date that will occur before the mandated report to Joint Finance. Even though the stated purpose, in the budget, of contracting-out these services is "cost reduction," cost is weighted only 40% when evaluat-

ing the proposals submitted under the RFP. There is also has a clause stating that if "mandatory" provisions cannot be met the scoring process will continue anyway, thus rendering the word "mandatory" meaningless. If one were to speculate on the author of this RFP, the Madhatter at Alice's tea party would be at the top of the list ("A word means exactly what I choose it to mean, nothing more and nothing less." ~ The Madhatter).

All unintentional humor aside, WSP takes this RFP very seriously and has already filed a grievance for non-notification of contracting-out services currently provided by our members. If the State can do this to one group of State employees, then it can do it to all of them. **The study that DOC is required to do will include the current contracting-out, at \$76/hour, as part of the state's cost.** They will consider the \$76/hour contracting costs to be the same as the cost for using State employees when evaluating the Proposals. It is laughable except that there are several of our members who will suffer if we were to remain quiet. Apparently it does not matter to Governor Doyle that it will cost taxpayers more money to contract-out these services. What is important to the DOC is doing what the Governor orders, so he can say he kept his pledge to cut 10,000 State employees, even if it costs us all more.

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

by Donalea Dinsmore

Unions and politics

In this November's election cycle, California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger placed an initiative on the ballot that would have required unions to obtain members' permission, on an annual basis, to use dues money for political purposes. Had this initiative passed, it would have seriously undermined the ability of California public employee unions to represent their members. Like it or not, politics significantly influences public sector jobs. Federal law prohibits using dues money to make campaign contributions; however, there is much more to union political programs than funding campaigns. They also include professional lobbying, member-to-member communication, education on issues affecting the membership, and member involvement. Effective lobbying involves not only hiring a lobbyist who knows the key players in the Legislature, tracks legislation, and advocates for members' interests, it also demonstrates to legislators that



an issue affects voters in their district. Accomplishing these things involves building a communication network that both educates union members on the

issues and moves people to action when necessary. Often it means asking members to contact their legislators about specific issues or to participate in a rally at the Capitol.

We are not immune from political influence right here in Wisconsin. Two years ago the Legislature raided the Compensation Reserve Fund to guarantee 0% and 1% raises at the same time we were strong-armed into paying additional out-of-pocket costs for our health insurance. There have been multiple times when members of the Legislature have threatened to remove the right to collectively bargain our health insurance payments and to change the retirement age. Governor Doyle's last budget proposed privatizing healthcare at the Department of Corrections; prohibiting State Foresters from working on private forestry issues and contracting-out for services that other State employees once provided. The Taxpayer's Bill of Rights

(TABOR), legislation that has been devastating to Colorado's economy and public services, keeps resurfacing in Wisconsin. We expect to see another attempt to pass a TABOR in Wisconsin after the first of the year.

In each of these cases, the union's political program through AFT-Wisconsin, sprang into action. We put together literature to educate members and legislators; used phone banks to contact members; made contacts with key legislators and called on AFT (national) for assistance in dealing with the really tough problems. We win some and we lose some. It takes tremendous resources to sustain momentum with the continuing attack on the public sector. WSP leadership can only be as effective as the membership's willingness to get involved. Consider how you can contribute to the effort the next time we need our members to contact legislators, help with a phone bank, solicit funds for the Committee on Political Education (COPE) or represent the interests of Wisconsin Science Professionals on that committee. If you'd like to get more involved, contact your District Representative or one of the other WSP officers – we welcome your interest!

Food safety = Food scientists

by Marie Stewart

With the discovery of "new" diseases such as "mad cow" disease in cattle and "chronic wasting" disease in deer, in addition to some old standbys like Salmonella and E-Coli, along with the increasing risk of terrorism, the protection of our food sources has become more critical than ever. The job of the Food Scientist is to do exactly that. These employees are located in the Department of Ag, Trade & Consumer Protection in the Bureau's of Food Safety & Inspection and Meat Safety & Inspection.

Those in the Food Safety & Inspection area focus on safety in the food and dairy industries. They evaluate the

design, materials, and construction of complex food and dairy processing systems. They need to understand food pathogens and hazards and test complex pasteurization equipment to make sure that the process is functioning properly and that public health controls are in place. Critical food safety "control points" are monitored as well as "HACCP" or Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point plans. They also coordinate food emergency response plans involving food impacts on human and/or animal health. They review retail food inspection programs at the local level and provide training of retail food inspection staff who work for local health departments.

Food Scientists in the Bureau of Meat Safety & Inspection perform similar duties in the meat processing industry including: developing and monitoring a meat sampling program; consulting with lab personnel on chemical and microbiological analysis of meat food products; providing information to the meat industry on good manufacturing and production control methods; reviewing labels and formulas and evaluating plans and construction of meat processing facilities.

Again, we'd like to welcome this important group of public employees to the Wisconsin Science Professionals union!

Reaching higher ground

by John Burger

Three of the Unions at the UWHC — the SEIU, the WSEU and the WSP — began communicating with each other in the fall of 2004 about their goals for bargaining. After the summer of 2005, however, these communications became a series of regular meetings where the challenges each Union was facing was openly discussed. The result of this open relationship has been the start of meetings with the UWHC Human Resources Dept. about policies and procedures that are affecting members in each of these bargaining units in a negative fashion. The first of these meetings was held on 11/22/05 and the opening topic was discussion about UWHC Policy 9.13 “Time and Attendance.”

Policy 9.13 had been on the books for some time. A recent change in how this policy was being implemented had resulted in all three Unions filing grievances to protect their members. The joint meetings between the Unions, and their discussions about the impact of Policy 9.13 on each unit’s membership, lead to the realization that progressing with individual actions was not going to achieve an acceptable result in the near future. It was likely that the UWHC, SEIU, WSEU, and the WSP would spend countless hours and a fair amount of money, in the end,

creating an adversarial environment, through the grievance process that would not only possibly degrade labor-management relations, but also potentially lengthen the time frame for resolution of other matters. The end result would be frustration and disappointment from all parties about the lack of progress.

The three Unions jointly requested a meeting to speak openly about the problems with Policy 9.13, not to affect the results of any number of ongoing grievances, but to find out where the other party stood and to clarify the issues all sides were having. The confusion over UWHC Policy 9.13 was so severe that no two sources of information could provide the same response to the same question.

Those attending the 11/22/05 meeting were: from the SEIU, Steward Mike Cordes and Staff Representative Ted Kraig; from WSEU Local 1942 were President Rick Choudoir and WSEU Council 24 Field Representative Maggie Merdler; and from the WSP, I attended along with our AFT-W Staff Representative Mindy Taranto. Jan Bultema, the Vice President of Human Resources and Gary Johnson the Director of Employee and Labor Relations at the UWHC were also in attendance.

The first meeting yielded an exchange of information from both sides. The end result was a desire to

continue meeting to help both sides clarify where they differed on the specifics of the policy, and where they agreed. “Once we know what it is we do and don’t agree on, we can progress from that point,” said Rick Choudoir of the WSEU. “Right now we don’t even know what ground we share in common.” Tentative meeting times are to be looked at to see if another meeting can be set up this year.

The goal of the meetings on Policy 9.13 is to get all UWHC employees — labor relations staff and union stewards — on the same page so a consistent message can be sent to the various union memberships, and to UWHC Management, to prevent abuse, encourage a stronger employee/employer relationship and, from the “partner process,” establish stronger more effective labor-management ties.

Help Katrina victims

Nearly 15,000 teachers, school support staff, and others represented by the AFT have been affected by the devastation of Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita. Read AFT members’ dramatic stories of hardship and survival at www.aft.org.

AFT affiliates and members can help by making contributions to the AFT Disaster Relief Fund, which provides direct assistance to AFT members who are victims of natural disasters. You can contribute online at www.aft.org.katrina or send your contribution to:

AFT Disaster Relief Fund
Attn: Connie Cordovilla
555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20001

All contributions to the fund made since the hurricane’s landfall (Aug. 28) are tax deductible to the extent permissible by the law.



Bargaining and “E” bulletins: Everything’s going electronic!

As you already know, bargaining updates are now being sent electronically via the “WSP Bargaining Bulletin.” Progress at the bargaining table with OSER (Office of State Employment Relations) has been slow. OSER continues to spend much of its time negotiating with WSEU, the largest state employee’s union. OSER has also recently had some staff leave which has left them more short-handed than ever for bargaining. We anticipate bargaining momentum will pick up in January. Keep looking for additional Bargaining Bulletins in your e-mail.

In an effort to provide more timely communication to our members we recently initiated “Science in Action,” an e-bulletin for general information we think you need or want to know about. The first one went out to everyone on November 7th. Roger Springman (DATCP) is spearheading this effort. If you have questions, concerns, compliments and/or an item you think should be in an “e-bulletin” to our members, let Roger know. He can be reached at: roger.springman@datcp.state.wi.us or 608-224-4545.

SHORT TAKES

by Shirley Haidinger

State salaries sluggish

The salaries of state employed professionals exhibited sluggish growth for the second straight year, according to the sixth annual AFT Public Employees Compensation Survey, released in September. The 2005 report revealed that the median salary increase across the 45 jobs surveyed was 1.19 percent in 2004-05, up only slightly from the previous year's 0.45 percent increase. Over the three-year period from 2002 to 2005, the median cumulative increase was only 4.6 percent, which compares to an inflation rate of 8.1 percent over the same time frame. See the full report at www.aft.org/pubemps/news/2005compmsurvey.htm.

Poverty in Wisconsin

About 600,000 people here live in poverty, according to the WI Community Action Program Assn. Over the period 2003-2004, Wisconsin had the highest growth rate of people living in poverty in the U.S. The majority of those who experience poverty are white and one-third are children. However, racial minorities suffer from disproportionately high rates of poverty. The poverty rate for black children in WI is six times that for white kids: the worst disparity in the U.S. For the full report, *Poverty Matters*, go to www.wiscap.org.

Poverty in America

According to the *Center for Promise and Opportunity*, 37 million Americans now live in poverty, including nearly 13 million children (www.promiseandopportunity.com/issues/poverty/).

- The number of Americans living in poverty rose from 35.9 million in 2003 to 37 million in 2004, an increase of 1.1 million.
- 12.7 percent of Americans are living in poverty today. This figure includes 7.9 million families, an increase from 7.6 million families in 2003.
- Both the number of Americans living in poverty and the official poverty rate have risen for four



straight years, from 2000 to 2004.

- 2004 marked the second consecutive year in which real median household income showed no change.
- Contrary to popular belief, most people in poverty are employed.

Health care in America

- Between 2002 and 2003, the number of uninsured Americans rose by 1.4 million. In 2004, the number of uninsured Americans rose by another 800,000, leaving 45.8 million Americans without health care coverage.
- More than 8.3 million children under the age of 18 remained uninsured in 2004.
- 18.9 percent of children living in poverty are uninsured.
- The proportion of people who receive health insurance from their employer continued to drop between 2003 and 2004, from 60.4 percent to 59.8 percent, the lowest levels in a decade.
- Meanwhile, the number of people receiving assistance through government health insurance programs continues to rise. In 2004, 27.2 percent of Americans received some sort of government-sponsored health insurance, an increase from 26.6 in 2003.



Wal-Mart watch

Outrage against the negative impact Wal-Mart has on its workers and our communities is leading to action and legislation. At the State Capitol, November 16, Sen. Dave Hansen (D-Green Bay) and Rep. Terese Berceau (D-Madison) introduced legislation that would roll back the health care costs Wal-Mart refuses to pay. According to a recent report by Wisconsin Citizen Action, almost one-fifth of Wal-Mart's Wisconsin workforce is receiving some form of publicly-funded health care (Medicaid or BadgerCare) at a direct cost to the state this year of approximately \$14 million. When combined with other indirect costs like higher health insurance premiums, Wisconsin citizens are paying \$19 billion for Wal-Mart's "always low prices" this year alone. For more information visit: WakeUpWalMart.com and WalMartWatch.com.

Budget cuts pass, tax breaks stall

U.S. House Republican leaders twisted just enough arms shortly after midnight Nov. 18 to eke out a 217-215 vote win for a Bush administration-backed \$50 billion package of spending cuts in vital working family programs. But House leaders postponed until December the House vote on a \$70 billion package of tax cuts largely for the wealthy, failing to pass the measure as planned before the Thanksgiving recess. The Senate approved its version of the tax cut bill in another after-midnight vote Nov. 18. The House bill would cut billions from Medicaid health services for poor children and long-term care patients, student loan programs, child support enforcement, foster care, and Social Security disability payments and food stamps. The Senate passed a slightly smaller spending cut bill and its own tax cut package. But observers expect the House version with the huge tax breaks for the wealthy to be the final product of a House-Senate conference. For more information, visit <http://www.aflcio.org>.

More for us, none for you

The Republican-controlled Congress, which has blocked a raise in the minimum wage three times this year, voted Nov. 18 to give itself its eighth pay raise since the minimum wage was last raised in 1997. While millions of minimum wage workers continue to struggle on \$5.15 an hour, the congressional pay raise, approved as part of the fiscal year 2006 Transportation-Treasury Appropriations bill, will give lawmakers a \$3,100-a-year pay hike. Minimum wage workers who work full-time earn just \$10,700 a year. Members of Congress, though, will be making \$31,600 a year *more* than they did in 1997. Call or write your lawmakers' and send them a message that you are outraged by their priorities. You can find the office numbers for your U.S. representative at <http://www.house.gov> and for your senators at <http://www.senate.gov>.



Welcome to our new AFT-Wisconsin president, Andy Gussert!

by Marie Stewart

After six years of skillful leadership by Bob Beglinger, in very turbulent economic times, the leadership “reins” of AFT-Wisconsin were turned over to Andy Gussert at the 74th Annual Convention in October. Andy grew up in Clintonville, Wisconsin. He relates that one of his first “labor” experiences was when he was nine and his Dad, who worked for the State Patrol, took him along to picket the State Patrol headquarters in Wausau, demanding better retirement benefits.... It sounds like it made a serious impression on him as he has been involved



in “labor” issues and progressive politics for the past 15 years.

Andy graduated cum laude from law school and has had many interesting jobs along the way to this one. He most recently was the President for the United Faculty & Academic Staff (UFAS) Local. He is currently the director of the Wisconsin Fair Trade Coalition which focuses on stopping trade deals that outsource Wisconsin jobs.

He also started a government relations firm, Progressive Strategies, about three years ago. He has worked on 22 political campaigns spanning 13 years including as a consultant for the Clinton Presidential campaign; as the

Executive Director of the Senate Democratic Policy Research Bureau; and Chair of the state Senate Democratic Committee in 2000. He’s also been Treasurer for the Assembly Democratic Campaign Committee and Deputy Director for the Assembly Democrats research activities. He was also the National Director of the State Environmental Resource Center, a million dollar project funded by the Turner Foundation. He has worked extensively with state budget, trade and labor policy issues, and has taught government courses as a part-time instructor at MATC.

His goals as AFT-Wisconsin President are: to maintain a strong commitment to “transparency, accountability and openness”; to present a budget process that members can understand; to empower more of our members with better skills and information to help with union issues; to train new, young, and emerging leaders and to build “labor density” and increase our “capacity” by welcoming a diversity of new members into the organization.

We wish him the best as our future depends on his – and the Union’s – success!

It’s scholarship time again!

AFT Robert G. Porter Scholars Program

This program offers four 4-year, \$8,000 post-secondary scholarships to graduating high school seniors who are dependents of AFT members, pursuing a career in labor, education, health care or government service. The program also offers 10 onetime \$1,000 grants to AFT members to assist with their continuing education. To qualify applicants must be members for at least one year, pursuing courses in labor relations or in their field of work. Completed applications *must* be postmarked by March 31, 2006, for consideration.



For more information or to download an application form go to www.aft.org/aftplus/scholarships/index.htm. To request an application be mailed to you, send an e-mail to porterscholars@aft.org with the applicant’s name and address and specifying the scholarship in which the applicant is interested or send a postcard to the address below:

Robert G. Porter Scholars Program
American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO
555 New Jersey Ave. N.W.
Washington, DC 20001

Union Plus Scholarship Program

This program, sponsored by the Union Plus Education Foundation, is open to students attending or planning to attend a four-year college or university, a community college or a technical college or trade school.

Since 1992, the Union Plus Scholarship Program has awarded more than \$1.8 million to students of working families who want to begin or continue their secondary education. The program is open to members, spouses, and dependent children of unions participating in any of the Union Plus programs, including AFT/WSP members. Members are not required to purchase any Union Plus products or participate in any Union Plus program to apply. The amount of the award ranges from \$500 to \$4,000. This is a onetime cash award sent to individual winners for undergraduate study beginning in the fall of the same year. All applications for the 2006 scholarships *must* be postmarked by January 31, 2006.

Winners are chosen based on academic achievement and potential, character, leadership, social awareness, career goals, and financial need. For more information or to download an application go to www.unionprivilege.org/benefits/education/scholarships/up.cfm.

Events

2006	
February 4	WSP Rep Council Meeting (tentative), Madison
April 28	State Employee Council Professional Development Day, Madison
April 28	WSP Rep Council Meeting (tentative), Madison
April 29	WSP Annual Convention – Officer Elections, Madison