

Professionally Speaking

NEWSLETTER of the
Wisconsin Science Professionals



Affiliated with American Federation of Teachers

AFT-Wisconsin, Wisconsin State AFL-CIO

JUNE 2005

R-E-S-P-E-C-T

by Marie Stewart

As Aretha Franklin sang it back in the “Mo Town” days, “I got to have (just a little bit) a little respect (just a little bit).” Well, state employees are singing that tune again these days. On April 21st an estimated 2,000 state employees and supporters gathered at the foot of the State Capitol to remind the Governor, the Legislature and the people of Wisconsin that our work IS important and that we deserve – at least – a little respect! Speakers, buttons, banners and placards challenged the current Legislature and Governor to understand the negative results that our state will suffer if they continue to cut state jobs and, in some cases, refill them with contractors. One worker even carried a sign to reelect Tommy Thompson – a sentiment he said he never thought he’d have. Several signs and buttons read, “Gard go Home” (John Gard) and “Outsource This in ‘06” (photo of Jim Doyle). There were other sentiments expressed that are probably not suitable for publication in this newsletter.

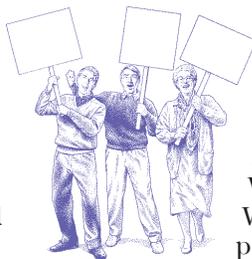
In an effort to quell the rising tide of state employee animus over poor wage offers,

unsettled contracts from 2003-05, forced health insurance payment increases and contracting-out of work, the Doyle administration has announced a proposal to offer a 5% overall wage rate increase for 2005-07. It’s a starting point.

The State food price index was up 5.7% at the end of 2004 (compared to 2003), energy prices have skyrocketed and a 12/1/04 article in the Wis. State Journal stated that Wisconsin HMOs posted a \$115 million profit for the THIRD QUARTER of 2004 (apparently a profit margin of

“only” about 3.4%). Considering the average increase in the Consumer Price Index has almost doubled in the past two years (from about a 2.1% average increase in 2003 to a 3.3% average increase in 2005 (US Dept. of Labor) we are far, far behind – again. Thanks for the 0% and 1% raises “guys,” but we can’t even fill our gas tanks on that any more.

Please do whatever you can to promote the importance of what you do for a living as a state employee.



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Ch Ch Ch Changes...

We’d like to say good-bye and THANK YOU to Chris Carlson who was our 1st Vice President and Bargaining Chair. Chris and his wife are leaving for greener pastures in the Washington D.C./ Maryland area.

We’d like to welcome Roger Springman, DATCP, as our new 1st Vice President. Roger has been involved with union issues for a number of years and we appreciate his willingness to continue to help.

WELCOME, Food Scientists!

Another group of state employees (formerly Food Safety Consultants represented by WSEU) has decided that they would be better served as members of the Wisconsin Science Professionals. We’d like to welcome them to our bargaining unit! We will profile the training and duties of a Food Scientist in a future issue of *Professionally Speaking*.



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Help needed!

by Gary Steffen

What do we need help with? The Wisconsin Science Professionals are a volunteer organization of state employees. Because of this, not all of the job classifications that we represent are involved with the union. We need to hear from these classifications for bargaining and also for the everyday decisions that are made that affect state employees. To meet this need, we are asking for state employees from all classifications, from all over the state to volunteer to serve as an advocate for their classification. As an advocate, you will be responsible for informing WSP about issues that are affecting your job and classification. We will also be asking that you also serve as a communicator to other members of your classification about the issues that are affecting them.



We would like to see as many people volunteer as possible. Worksite contacts are also encouraged to volunteer. The goal is to get at least one person from every job classification that we represent. If we do not get a volunteer from all classifications, we will make personal contacts to recruit people. With the new state budget and bargaining coming up, we will need to communicate and hear the concerns more than ever.

To volunteer, please email Heidi Holstad at holstad@aft-wisconsin.org.

Bargaining & dental insurance progress

By now you should have received two Bargaining Bulletins via your e-mail. The Bargaining Team will continue to update you using this method rather than trying to provide the updates in our newsletter, which is only coming out four times a year now.

Negotiations on the 2003-05 promised dental insurance are continuing. WSP has filed for arbitration on the matter and the State is continuing to discuss the issues with us. We will update the membership at the point where a significant decision needs to be made.

Events

2005

- June 10-12 AFT Public Employee Conference, Reno, NV
- June 18 WSP Rep Council Meeting, Madison
- July 23 WSP Rep Council Meeting, Madison
- July 31-Aug. 4 .. Great Lakes Union Leadership Institute, Delavan
- Sept. 17 WSP Rep Council Meeting, Madison
- Oct. 27-28 AFT-W Annual Convention, Oconomowoc

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

by Donalea Dinsmore

Time for celebration?

The Governor had just released his budget as we were printing the February newsletter and we were scrambling to figure out it's full implications for our members. Some of the position cuts were obvious (e.g., privatizing healthcare at Corrections and private foresters at DNR) and some were hidden (e.g., wildlife biologists if hunting and fishing license fees were not increased). As we considered what to do, we were aware that some actions



could save one set of jobs at the expense of others in our local or in our sister locals. I know that my job has been made more difficult because we have fewer IT people to support our computers and software applications. Since budget decisions now rest with the Joint Finance Committee in the Legislature, we combined our efforts with the other AFT-W state employee locals and arranged meetings between members who live in district with legislators on Joint Finance. All told, 54 people met with their legislators to tell their stories. The pharmacists and foresters did a great job in telling their stories, as did other members who relayed how much more difficult it is to do our jobs. Next came a rally at the State Capitol where those assembled expressed their dissatisfaction with the state eliminating their jobs only to contract out for the same services at higher prices and the inadequate compensation offered for the 2003-05 biennium. Added to that, we've seen bills to raise the retirement age and threats to once again raid the compensation reserve. Through the State Employee Council (SEC), we are scheduling joint membership meetings scheduled for the week of June 13 in Green Bay, Eau Claire, Waukesha, and possibly La Crosse to give an update on what's going on and begin working on the next phase

of our budget campaign.

It's against this backdrop that OSER approached the SEC about their plans for a celebration of 100th Anniversary of Civil Service. The celebration, to take place on the floor of the Assembly on June 17, will honor outstanding civil servants and those state employees that have spent 40 years or more working for the State of Wisconsin. The irony of this event is lost on no one. Who feels like celebrating for an hour with people who turn around and claim that public employees work on Easy Street so limiting their wages and cutting their benefits is appropriate?

The truth is that we need to celebrate the Centennial of Civil Service publicly, acknowledging the dedication of public employees who work with integrity and

transparency for the citizens of the State. Civil servants are accountable to the public in ways that the private sector is not. We are called to balance the long term public good with the sometimes short term needs of business interests. Although the system may need to be tweaked some to respond to employment needs in the 21st century, it's a system that has worked well in Wisconsin. We need to tell our stories of what it means to work for the State. Instead of being caricatures, we need to put a public face on public employees. I urge you to celebrate this Centennial by writing a letter to the editor, meeting with your legislator, or volunteering to be a part of our media campaign on the value of public employment. I would love to hear your stories too, so feel free to share them with me.

How would you like your newsletter "served"?

Some of us like paper and some of us like their documents "served" electronically. Please complete the survey below and let us know if you would prefer to CONTINUE to receive the WSP newsletter as a paper document in the mail OR if you would be interested in receiving it ELECTRONICALLY via e-mail. **Please check one item below.**

- I would like to continue to receive the newsletter as a paper copy in the mail.
- I would be interested in receiving the newsletter electronically via e-mail.

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Return this form to:
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More on personal vehicles and State business

by Rick Thorbjørnsen

Even if you're willing (when absolutely necessary) to use your personal vehicle for state business, you need to be aware of what is covered by the state and what is not. This is quite simple since the state *will* reimburse for mileage and that is *all* they will cover! To maximize your mileage reimbursement figure, make sure that you try to schedule the use of a state vehicle. If you are unable to schedule a state vehicle, be sure to obtain a non-availability slip.

All other costs incurred when you use your personal vehicle for state business (i.e., minor repairs, collision deductibles, etc.) are in fact yours. If you are using your personal vehicle on a semi-regular to regular basis, you should definitely discuss this with your insurance company and make appropriate arrangements to have your vehicle insured as a "business" vehicle if required by your insurer. This may result in increased personal insurance rates for you.

You should also be aware that DOA is *not* certain that the state can force employees to use their personal vehicles. It wasn't until 1998 that job appointment letters changed to advise employees that they may be required to use a personal vehicle for state business if a state vehicle is not available. There are many people who have not had that potential mentioned in their letters of appointment or in their job interview. There are employees who do not have the exclusive use of a vehicle or may not have a personal vehicle at all. In short, there are a number of questions regarding this issue and we are working at resolving them. If you're placed in the position of being required, by management, to use your personal vehicle, contact your WSP District Representative!

You also need to be aware that there are requirements to be a qualified driver of state vehicles. DOA has created a system, working with DOT, to cross check each agency's list of drivers with state DOT records to verify qualification status. In the new Vehicle Use Agreement, there will be a statement that you agree to notify your supervisor whenever any negative change in the status of your driving record may occur, such as license revocation, restriction, or suspension.

According to the new Fleet Policy, state employees may not drive a state vehicle if their driving record reflects any of the following conditions:

- If a person has three or more moving violations and/or at-fault accidents in the past two years.
- Operating While Intoxicated (OWI) or Driving Under the Influence (DUI) citation within 12 months.

- Suspension or revocation of driver's license.

If violations are discovered, a letter will be given to the affected employee by their supervisor, letting them know if they need to provide further documentation or disqualifying them from using a state vehicle. If you're in an accident, it is beneficial to get a copy of the accident report in order to verify "at fault" status for your own personal records (as proof for resolving future insurance questions or driving history issues) as well as for resolving any questions about your eligibility to remain a qualified driver of state vehicles.

One additional item to note is that, effective May 1st, DOA announced that the reimbursement rate for personal vehicle use *when a state vehicle IS available*, has been increased to \$0.28 per mile.



Tips for responding to a poor performance evaluation

by Camille Monahan, AFT - Wisconsin Staff Representative

1) Do NOT respond to the negative language and personal comments that may be in the performance evaluation by attacking your supervisor. For example, in a recent performance evaluation I read for a member the phrase "hostile attitude" appeared. It would not be helpful to respond that you are not hostile but that your supervisor is a jerk.

2) DO respond to each of the items in your position description and describe how you met or exceeded the criteria. For example, if your position description has an item about working well with colleagues, describe projects in which you worked with coworkers effectively.

3) DO include a section about how you are proactively working to meet and exceed work expectations. For example, if you have requested training or brought up ideas for process improvement, point that out in neutral language.

4) If necessary (and only if necessary), include a few words about any physical limitation reasons that may have negatively impacted your performance and how you are working to overcome any limitation.

5) All language in the response should be neutral in tone. No inflammatory or angry language.

6) Send your response to me or a steward PRIOR to turning it in to your supervisor. Give us an opportunity to read through it and suggest any improvements.



SHORT TAKES

by Shirley Haidinger

100 years of civil service

On June 17, 2005, Wisconsin will celebrate the centennial anniversary of its civil service law, which requires that state government hiring decisions be merit-based through the use of competitive examinations. Back in 1905, Governor Robert LaFollette signed one of the nation's first civil service bills into law. Wisconsin's law was also among the strongest because it covered the major portion of state personnel.

Go to <http://www.civilservicecentennial.wi.gov/> to view a copy of the original law, hear from long-time state employees, and learn about other events and exhibits that highlight the significance of this centennial.

School for Workers marks 80th year

The University of Wisconsin Extension's School for Workers celebrated 80 years of labor education with a conference, June 10-11, at the Pyle Center on the UW-Madison campus. The theme of the two-day conference was remembering the past while exploring new directions for the labor movement in the years ahead. The School for Workers is the oldest, continuously operating, university-based labor education program in the United States.

Campaign finance reform

To learn about the work that the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign and Common Cause are doing to push for campaign finance reform in Wisconsin, go to <http://www.wisdc.org/> and www.commoncause.org/states/wisconsin. Let the governor and your legislators know that you want reform now.

Social Security facts

Since President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Social Security into law in 1934, millions of America's workers have earned benefits by paying into the system, creating a safety net that keeps retirees, survivors of workers who die young, and people with disabilities out of poverty. To learn more about Social Security and the

controversial privatization proposal go to www.alfcio.org/socialsecurity, www.socsec.org, or <http://www.cbpp.org/>.

For information on the importance of Social Security benefits to Wisconsin residents, check out the recent Center for Wisconsin Strategy report at www.cows.org.

Montana law requires accountability

Montana Gov. Brian Schweitzer signed into law legislation in April that will result in greater transparency and accountability in state contracting procedures. The bill gives all unions representing state employees direct and early access to privatization plans, as well as a voice in the decision-making process. In addition to requiring the legislative audit committee to review and hold public hearings on privatization plans, the measure gives the governor sole authority to approve or reject plans to privatize public services that are currently or normally conducted by state employees. The new law also creates a new standard for agency privatization plans. The Montana statute can be viewed at the state's Web site: <http://www.unionvoice.org/ct/W71YXC11ZPvD/>.

AFT e-Activist Network

AFT members are invited to join the AFT e-Activist Network at <http://www.aft.org/e-activist/> and become part of a powerful network to make your views known to those in Congress and state legislatures who represent you. By completing the profile on the e-Activist sign-up page, members will become part of the AFT's successful grass-roots lobbying program. With this information, the AFT can target communications as much as possible so that the union's message can have the maximum impact on Capitol Hill or in your state legislature.

More jobs leaving U.S.

There is growing evidence that major U.S. corporations are exporting more and more jobs. The Commerce Department's Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) reported April 19 the workforce of U.S. multinational companies employed in the United States declined to about 21.8 million, a

reduction of 2.1 percent or 456,000 jobs, from 2002. Meanwhile, the number of employees working abroad for U.S. companies grew to 8.36 million, up 1.2 percent or 100,000 jobs, from the prior year. This continued a trend that began in 1988, when the share of U.S. multinational companies' employees working in the United States was 78.8 percent. U.S. multinational companies account for about one out of every five U.S. jobs in private industry, BEA said.

Outsourcing study

Washington became one of only five states to pass legislation on job exporting. With bipartisan support, the Legislature passed a measure April 23 to create a taskforce to investigate public contracting-out overseas, the impact of national trade agreements on the state's contracting and associated outsourcing issues. For more information, visit <http://www.washtech.org>.

Taxpayers foot bill for Wal-Mart

There's new evidence that Wal-Mart, the world's largest employer, keeps its health care costs down by shoving them onto taxpayers. Tennessee recently reported the giant retailer leads a list of employers with workers on the state's public health program. Some 9,617 Wal-Mart employees — about a quarter of the company's 37,000 workforce in the state — get their health care through TennCare, the state program for residents who are eligible for Medicaid or who lack health insurance. Find out more about Wal-Mart at www.walmartcostsyoud.com.

Profits soar, wages don't

The fruits of the growing national economy are padding the pockets of companies, not workers, according to a study by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Since the recovery began in 2001, only 23 percent of national income growth has gone to wages, the lowest of rate of any post-World War II recovery, while the proportion going to corporate profits — 44 percent — is the highest. For more information, visit <http://www.cbpp.org>.

Fear and intimidation

by John Burger, UWHCA

We hear the words, but shrug them off. Fear and intimidation are tools we read about in books or watch in amazement on television. They are the tools of villains and despots against enemies and threats. Fear and intimidation are not tactics a person normally expects their employer to use in the workplace. We would expect an attempt to understand the situation and the issues involved by discussing them to reveal the root causes of the problem. The result of these discussions being the creation of guidelines people can understand and follow; guidelines that can be referred to and discussed; guidelines that are written down clearly and concisely so as to avoid inconsistency and ambiguity.

All too frequently it seems that our managers are being rushed to the point that they are not allowed the time they need to consider new guidelines and policies. They rarely have the time needed to discuss issues with staff or even alert staff to problems that exist in the work place. The end result of this is an alienation of the manager from the employee and the promotion of policies and guidelines that fall short of addressing the underlying issues that

are central to resolution of the problems. Where there used to be only one problem now there are several: an alienated workforce; poorly developed policies that may or may not be evenly applied; and, as the tension builds, new problems are created because the staff can see that the root causes of the original problems are not being dealt with. Staff may feel that management isn't listening to the employees and wonder if these problems will ever be fixed?

No employee should have to fear that poorly defined work rules will result in discipline and possible termination. No employee should have to fear that if they use a contractually guaranteed right that they may be forced to endure repeated investigations from their employer and be told that they are an abuser. No employee should have to live with the insult of a progressive discipline structure built on vague and nebulous guidelines but, wait, this isn't television and this isn't a book. Your employer isn't a villain or a despot but does employ a lot of managers. Who knows what agenda is being followed when fear and intimidation are used as a management tool?



How can you defend yourself from the fear? Who will stand with you while accusations against your good name are being made? The Union, *your* Union, the WSP. The Union is here to defend you and fight for your rights not only as an employee but a professional as well. If you want to stop the fear, if you want things to change, you have to communicate your problem to your Union. Write a letter and post it in the mail, send an e-mail, put a note on the door/desk/locker of one of your most valuable assets — your local Union contact.

Your Union can make sure that the policies you're being reprimanded for actually exist. We can challenge policies and reprimands that violate your rights. We can take your concerns to a higher level to find resolution. Your Union can fight for resolutions that assure no one else will have to put up with the situation you did. All these benefits, and more, are yours as a WSP member. All we need to start the process — to stop the fear — all your Union needs ...is to hear from U.

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