



CAROL WEIDEL, President

AFT/AFL-CIO

1334 APPLGATE RD. • MADISON, WI 53713-3184 • (608) 277-7700 • (800) 362-7390 • FAX (608) 277-7708

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TESTIMONY

Government Operations Committee

January 28, 1998

Carol Weidel, President, Wisconsin Federation of Teachers

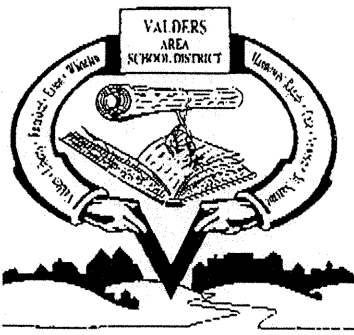
Information related to AB719

Our union, the Wisconsin Federation of Teachers, represents 6,000 professional employees in state government. They are accountants, wildlife biologists, economists, physicians and attorneys. Six union locals represent the largest share of the professional civil service employees. The Department of Employment Relations is responsible for maintaining the civil service system. This bill deals only with the DER's Division of Merit Recruitment and Selection. When I look at this legislation, it seems that DER is able to offer its services outside state government operations. However, I know differently.

Our largest local union, Wisconsin Professional Employees Council (WPEC) is still at the bargaining table over classification issues. DER is so short-staffed in the Division of Classification & Compensation that it is unable to perform its primary function --- maintained the classification system for state employees. WPEC represents nearly 4,000 state employees. Since the union started representing these employees just four years ago, DER has increased the classifications from 90 to more than 300 classification series. Less than a quarter of those original class series have been surveyed by DER staff. The remaining three quarters have not been updated in many years. These outdated specifications continue to age while other changes occur daily. Information technology changes occur at lightening speed. Federal regulations and state laws change daily. Yet the state employees who have to do the heavy lifting of

enforcing and enacting this legislation must work with outdated job titles and some salaries 20 to 40 percent below market rates.

I believe that government agencies should cooperate in the delivery of services. But before DER expand its ability to offer testing services to other government agencies, it should deliver its primary services first. The state classification system needs serious attention and staffing.



Striving for Excellence!

Valders Area School District

138 Jefferson St., Valders, Wisconsin 54245-9638

Voice: 920-775-9500 Fax: 920-775-9509 E-mail: www.valders.k12.wi.us

Thomas R. Fabian, Ed. D.
Superintendent of Schools

Joan Estes
Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

Tim Matthias
Director of Support Services

Thomas Hughes
Director of Special Education

William Eberhardt
Director of Buildings and Grounds

January 28, 1998

Ms. Stacy Meyer, Coordinator
Wisconsin City and County Testing Area
137 East Wilson Street
Madison, WI 53703

Dear Stacy:

Please accept this letter of endorsement for your department to expand services to various governmental agencies as proposed in AB719 and SB398.

Your predecessor, Marie Schuster, did a fantastic job helping us write job descriptions, evaluation documents, and job vacancy notices for our support areas; custodian, food service, secretary, and aides. Because of your departments assistance, I have an excellent system to develop a replacement for any of our support personnel.

I am delighted to recommend your department for helping school districts with these needs since we all are similar, yet need up-to-date procedures for guiding us and applicants to obtaining only the best.

I plan to send this letter to our local legislators in hopes, too, that they endorse your expanded mission.

Best wishes,

Dr. Thomas R. Fabian
Superintendent of Schools

blm

cc Senator Cal Potter
Senator Al Lasee
Representative Bob Ziegelbauer
Representative Frank Lasee

School District of Howard-Suamico

Frederic A. Stieg
District Administrator
920-434-4018

Dr. Gayle P. Frame
Assistant Superintendent -
Curriculum & Instruction
920-434-4018

John R. Keller
Assistant Superintendent -
Business Services
920-434-4000

January 28, 1998

Members of the Assembly Government Operations Committee:

RE: Assembly Bill 719

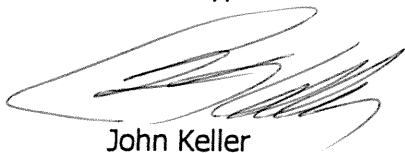
Request s230.05(8) be amended as proposed in AB719 so that school districts and other governmental units may tap the personnel expertise of the Department of Employment Relations.

The School District of Howard-Suamico has utilized state testing services as currently allowed by law. We need to evaluate certain positions and to develop an appropriate salary schedule. Personnel in the Department of Employment Relations have the ability to do this analysis but are prohibited by current law.

Why should AB719 become law?

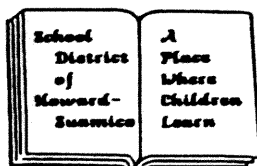
- **School districts are subject to revenue caps**
- **Many school districts cannot afford and do not have personnel specialists on staff**
- **Other school districts in the Bay area have expressed a similar interest in job analysis**
- **Neenah School District undertook a similar study at a cost of \$17,570**
- **Preliminary estimate from the Department of Employment Relations to perform job analysis is \$40 per hour**

Sincerely,



John Keller

Assistant Superintendent-Business Services



State of Wisconsin

Tommy G. Thompson
Governor

Jon E. Litscher
Secretary

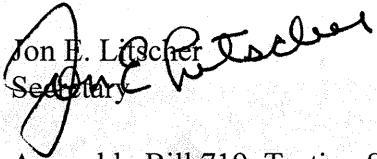


137 East Wilson Street
P.O. Box 7855
Madison, WI 53707-7855

DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS

DATE: January 28, 1998

TO: State Representative John Dobyms, Chairperson
Members
Assembly Committee on Government Operations

FROM: Jon E. Litscher
Secretary 

SUBJECT: Assembly Bill 719, Testing Services for Nonstate Governmental Units

The Department wishes to express its support of Assembly Bill 719, which would allow the Administrator of the Division of Merit Recruitment and Selection, in the Department of Employment Relations, to provide additional personnel services to Wisconsin local governments. These services would be provided through the Wisconsin City and County Testing Service, WCCTS, as this activity is known, is a unit within the Department of Employment Relations.

For more than 50 years, WCCTS has provided Wisconsin cities, towns, villages, counties, police departments, fire departments and school districts with multiple-choice examinations to help these jurisdictions evaluate applicants for employment and promotions. WCCTS develops and administers civil service exams for more than 200 clients throughout Wisconsin. Each year, we test more than 15,000 applicants for local government jobs.

WCCTS is staffed by 2.7 full-time equivalent positions. The Service is a separate function from the state civil service testing system. It is important to note that WCCTS is a completely program revenue activity that recovers all costs (direct and indirect) by charging fees to local government clients for the testing services we provide to them.

Under current law, WCCTS can provide testing services only. AB 719 would enable WCCTS to provide additional personnel services, on request, to our local government clients. In many cases, these jurisdictions have very limited personnel staffs and resources. Periodically, they ask us for additional services, but we must decline because current law allows WCCTS to provide testing services only.

In addition to the current testing we do, our clients have asked us for services such as planning recruitment strategies, conducting affirmative action and general recruiting, providing training on various personnel issues, analyzing jobs to develop position descriptions, and conducting wage surveys to help individual jurisdictions determine how much to pay their employees.

(continued)

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER



WCCTS' charges for these services would recover full costs -- salaries, benefits, overhead, and expenses directly related to each service we provide (such as the cost of producing training materials). Of course, the scope and extent of these additional services would be limited by our resources and expertise.

If we receive the authority to provide more services, we would also seek the authority to add one program revenue position, if and when the demand for these services requires more staff. Our fiscal estimate reflects the full cost of hiring an additional employe to meet potential demand. WCCTS would not hire this staff member unless, and until, increased business demands it. This additional position would also be fully funded by program revenue.

In closing, this amendment would enable WCCTS to meet a need identified by our customers -- local jurisdictions throughout Wisconsin -- for additional services. The Department has not attempted to market any additional services, but would simply like the opportunity to provide the personnel services our clients request.

Thank you for your consideration of our position on this legislation.



JOHN RYBA

STATE REPRESENTATIVE
90th Assembly District

January 28, 1998

TO: ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Rep. John Dobyys, Chair

Rep. Steve Wieckert, Vice Chair

Rep. Alvin Ott

Rep. Frank Urban

Rep. Carol Kelso

Rep. Robert Ziegelbauer

Rep. Marlin Schneider

Rep. Leon Young

Rep. Jeffrey Plale

FROM: REP. JOHN RYBA

Mr. Chairman and Members:

First, I would like to thank you for scheduling AB-719 so quickly for a public hearing. As all of you know, the time to act on bills is growing short.

The idea for AB-719 was brought to me and Sen. Drzewiecki by John Keller, the Assistant Superintendent-Business Services of the Howard-Suamico School District. Mr. Keller has taken time out of his busy work schedule to travel from Green Bay to speak before your committee today.

Our bill is really quite simple. Under current law the Department of Employment Relations (DER) may provide testing services to nonstate governmental units. However, the department is prohibited from providing other personnel services, such as job surveying, to these same customers.

The advantage for our school districts and other governmental units is that DER can provide these services at a fraction of the cost they would incur through a private firm. At the same time the fees charged by DER are adequate to cover the additional services allowed under AB-719 without increasing the department's budget. With the mounting pressure on schools and municipalities to keep expenses down, this is one area where taxpayer dollars could be saved if Assembly Bill 719 becomes law.

I hope you will vote to recommend passage of AB-719 and move it to the floor for debate by the full Assembly. Thank you.

Wisconsin's Quiet Crisis

The erosion of the state professional employee workforce

Presented by:

Wisconsin Professional Employees Council

Art Foeste, President

January 28, 1998

Executive Summary

There is a quiet crisis in Wisconsin state government.

The workforce of highly trained professional employees is being decimated by chronic recruitment and retention problems. As we show:

- many large job categories have annual turnover rates of 15-30 percent
- some state jobs pay 20-40 percent below the going private sector rate
- the 3,900 professionals in the Fiscal & Staff unit are paid, on average, 12 percent below the private sector and 18 percent below the comparable public sector in Wisconsin
- because of vacancies, critical work in state agencies sometimes goes undone
- because of vacancies, some agencies are forced to turn to high-priced private contractors to perform critical tasks
- some professionals have left state service, only to return as high-priced consultants
- agency managers plead with the Department of Employment Relations for relief

Ultimately, it is the taxpayer who pays for this crisis. When experienced employees leave, the efficiency of state agencies suffers. When positions go unfilled, critical work is often left undone. When high-priced contractors are hired to fill gaps, agencies with fixed budgets cut back on services in other areas.

This report details the crisis and its underlying cause by using state agencies' own data and the words of state agency managers and employees to tell the story.

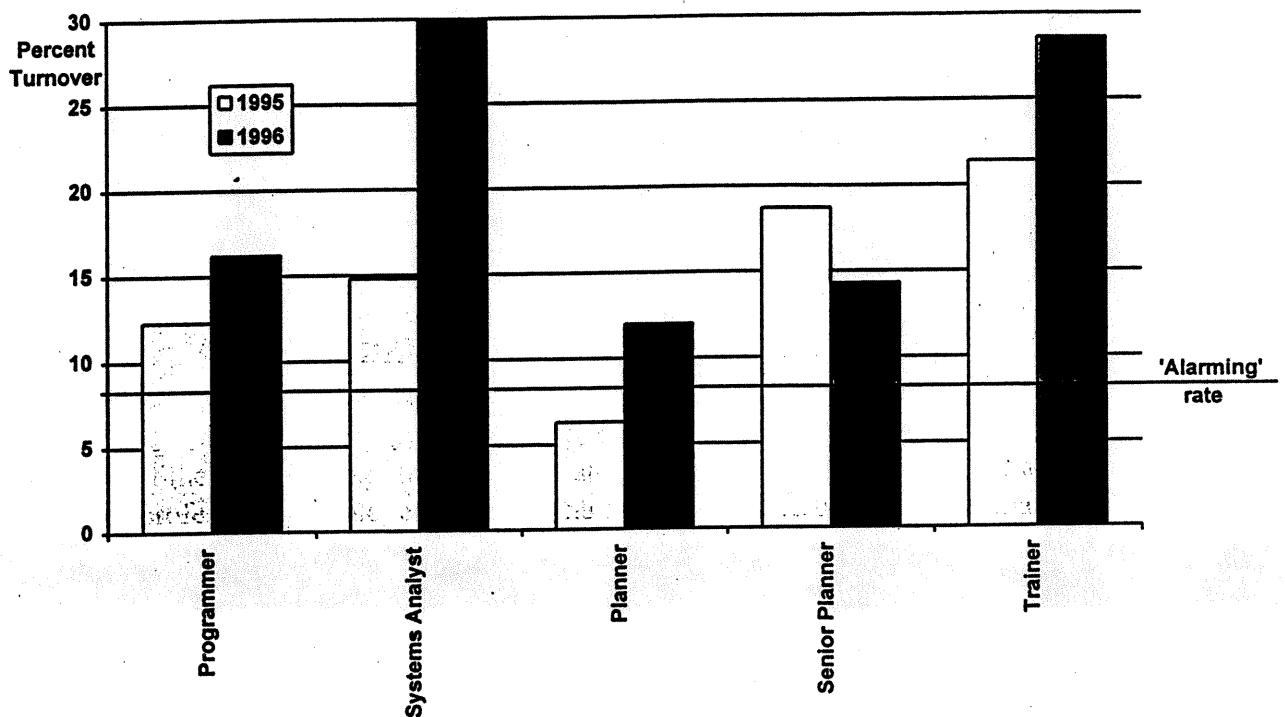
The conclusion is that Wisconsin state government needs to quickly enact several good personnel management practices to recruit and retain a quality professional employee workforce.

Wisconsin's Quiet Crisis was prepared by the Wisconsin Professional Employees Council of the Wisconsin Federation of Teachers. The Wisconsin Professional Employees Council represents 3,900 state professional employees. Comments or questions about this report are welcome. Contact Mike Plaisted at (608) 277-7700 Extension 233.

'Alarming' Turnover Rates

One of the most vexing problems for state managers is the high turnover rate among state professional employees. According to data supplied by the state Department of Employment Relations, turnover rates in key professional job categories currently range from 12 to 30 percent a year.¹

Chart A: Annual turnover rates far above "alarming" level



According to a state personnel specialist with the Department of Employment Relations, anything over an 8 percent annual turnover rate in professional-level jobs is "alarming."²

Turnover, especially among senior, experienced employees, greatly affects productivity. It is often possible to measure productivity in dollars and cents. For example, state Revenue Field Auditors examine the books of large, out-of-state corporations to determine how much taxes they owe to Wisconsin. One study showed that experienced auditors assess an average of \$740,000 a year more in owed taxes when compared to those with less experience.³

But, the effects of turnover cannot always be calculated in terms of lost revenue. For example, it is a common practice for agencies to assign senior, experienced employees to train new employees, so that a good deal of work time is wasted in training.

To make matters worse, new employees often stay in state jobs only long enough to get technical on-the-job training and then leave for higher paying jobs in local government or the private sector, prompting one disgruntled administrator to refer to his division as "a technical school for the private sector."

In some cases it has gotten to the point where there are not enough senior professional employees left to do the training, so that new employees are left to learn their jobs on their own--often through trial and error.

"Supervisors attribute this turnover rate to staff dissatisfaction with the position's pay rate. For example, since 1990, one particular (Program & Planning Analyst) position has been vacant four different times."

Internal memo from Assistant Human Resources Director
Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection

Comparable Market Wages

The cause of these "alarming" turnover rates is obvious to state managers.

The problem is apparent in a comparison between wages for state employees in specific classifications and wages for comparable jobs in local government and in the private sector.⁴ The following illustrates the problem:

Information Technology Specialists IT Specialists include computer programmers and systems analysts. The services of this group are in high demand and salaries in the private sector and other government agencies have risen accordingly. However, state wages have not kept pace. Depending on the individual employee's specialty, state employee *IT wages are 22.6 to 40.7 percent below the comparable market rate.*

Paralegals Paralegals do research and prepare cases to assist lawyers and managers. Private sector employers have increasingly come to rely on highly trained and experienced paralegals so that they can more efficiently use the time of lawyers. State agency managers agree that state employed paralegals are underpaid, but they claim they just don't have the money to fix the problem. *Average wages for state paralegals are 21 percent below the comparable market rate.*

Real Estate Appraisers and Agents The state buys and sells real estate for such things as highways, public buildings and public lands. The employees who do this work are not merely selling a house; they are responsible for appraisals, negotiating contracts and administering complex laws and regulations. Their skill and experience ensures that taxpayers get fair value in real estate dealings with the private sector. Depending on experience and specialty, *wages for state senior real estate specialists are 20 percent below the prevailing market rate.*⁵

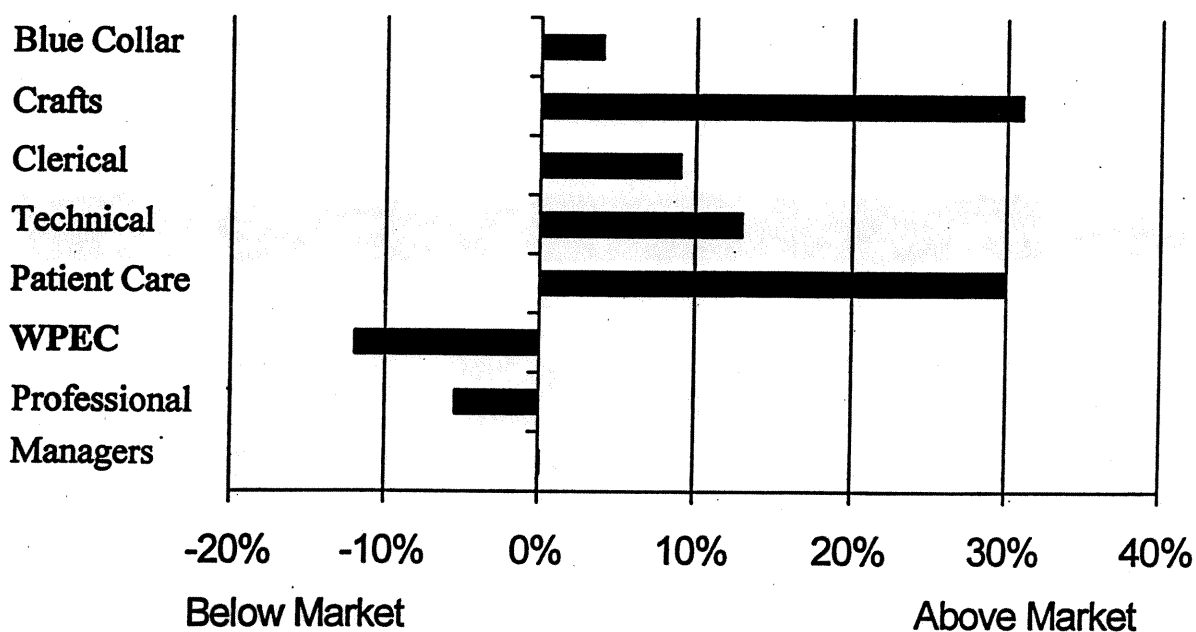
"(I)n the IT policy area, it would be difficult under the current compensation structure to attract qualified candidates with sufficient knowledge and experience to meet the needs of agency."

Internal memo from Personnel Specialist
Department of Administration

Average Wages

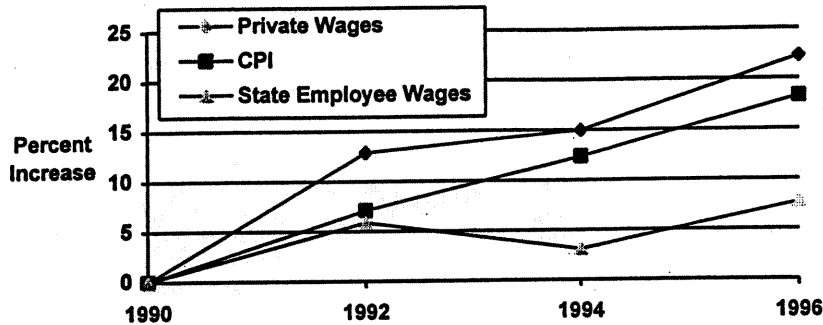
The state's own Department of Workforce Development issued a report in June, 1997, that showed the average wage for professional employees in the Fiscal & Staff unit was 12 percent below their private sector counterparts in Wisconsin and 18 percent below the average for other government agencies in the state.⁶

Chart C: Average wages for Wisconsin employee groups Compared to large private sector employers in state



Some political leaders approvingly note that state employee wage increases have lagged behind the private sector in recent years. They might also note that the average wage of state employees has lagged behind the increase in the cost of living.⁷

Chart D: State employee average wage increase lags behind private sector and inflation



According to the DWD's own statistics, state employee average wages have increased by 7.7 percent in the last six years. Over the same period, inflation was up by 18.3 percent and average private sector wages increased by 22.3 percent.

While 1997 average wage data are not yet available, it is known that state professional employees wages increased by an average of approximately 2 percent in the state fiscal year ending in June. Since both inflation and private sector wage increases are holding at an annual rate of increase that is approximately twice that amount, the gap is certainly greater today.

It is also important to note that these wage figures are *averages*. In some years, the state has used available funds to give above-average wage increases to some groups and individuals. Consequently, while a few employees got raises above the average, some necessarily got less.

"I got a 2 cent an hour raise this last year. That's not 2 percent...but just 2 cents!"

Joan O.
Administrative Assistant

Pay Range Compression

While state personnel managers give lip-service to "excellence in the workforce," --sometimes using the phrase on business cards and letterheads--in truth they have set up a pay plan that systematically does not reward experience or knowledge among state professional employees. It works like this:

A new employee is hired and, if they perform well, they will be promoted quickly up to what is called the "Objective Level" for their job classification. After that there is nowhere for them to advance within their class. As a practical matter, the Objective Level is as high as they can go.

Consequently, even though employees typically continue to learn new skills and gain additional experience, they will not be promoted and are stuck receiving the small across the board percentage raises as long as they stay on the job. The result is what is called *pay range compression* where the wages of new, less experienced employees quickly catch up with the hourly wages of senior, more experienced employees, and then stagnate.

Some professional jobs require years of experience to learn and several require up to a two-year probationary period. It is important, in many cases, for employees to experience an entire state and federal budget cycle--which covers three years--before they experience all aspects of their jobs. Many state government projects are developed, implemented, evaluated and revised over years and it is important to have a continuity of knowledge over the life of the project.

Most professionals continue to up-date and learn new skills through special education and training courses, sometimes through employer-sponsored training and sometimes on their own.

The effects of pay range compression were captured in a survey of state planners. In that survey, 78 percent of the senior state planners said they believed they had little or no chance for advancement in their current job and an equal number said they knew of at least one colleague who had quit to take a job for higher pay in the previous two years.⁸

"Of course, all of the supervisors complain about the compensation available to recruit and retain employees."

Internal memo from a Personnel Manager
Department of Industry, Labor & Human Relations

The Cost of the Problem

In spite of the anti-government attitudes expressed by some politicians, the citizens of Wisconsin have come to rely on, and expect, quality services provided by state professional employees.

When state agencies can no longer provide those services with regular state employees--because of chronic recruitment and retention problems--they have one of two choices. They can allow the work to go undone. Or they can contract with private sector consultants to provide the professional help to do the work. Recent cases of the Wisconsin State Lottery and the CARES welfare information system illustrate what happens when agencies are faced with this dilemma.

The CARES case In one well-publicized case, it was discovered that the Department of Workforce Development hired Deloitte & Touche, an out-of-state consulting corporation, for \$35,000,000 to maintain the state's CARES welfare data system.

Under the CARES contract, *taxpayers are paying Deloitte & Touche exactly one and one-half times what it would have cost to hire regular state employees to do the work.*⁹

Because the agency contracted with Deloitte & Touche to do the *development* work for the CARES, and it could not retain senior systems analysts because of the low pay, it never developed the knowledge necessary to *maintain* the system. Consequently, when it came time to start running the system, the agency turned to the only firm that knew how it worked. And, since Deloitte & Touche has a monopoly on the knowledge of the system, they were able to write their own ticket when it came to negotiating the contract.

The case of the Lottery One alternative to paying high prices for private sector contractors is to leave the work undone. That was the option the Thompson Administration chose in the case of the Wisconsin State Lottery in 1996-97.

In 1995, the Administration decided to stop filling vacancies among professionals at the Lottery. Their plan was to eliminate employees through attrition and then ask private sector firms to bid to do the work. However, according to the independent Legislative Audit Bureau's report, when it came time to hire a private contractor to do the Lottery work, there were only two bidders and the bids were so high that the agency decided to leave the work undone.¹⁰

Largely as a result of having no professional service staff in the field, the LAB estimates that *lottery sales will be approximately \$20,000,000 below their projected levels next year*. Of course, as sales plummet, so does the property tax relief that comes from those sales.

The Revolving Door Perhaps the best illustration of the absurdity of state personnel policy toward professional employees is the fact that some of the employees who leave their state jobs to go to work in the private sector then use their knowledge of state operations to *return to work for the state as private sector contractors*. Of course, when this happens, the cost to taxpayers doubles. The employee not only gets a substantially higher salary than when they worked directly for the state, but there are additional costs: the administrative cost to agencies to seek bids and monitor the contract plus the administrative overhead and profit of the contracted firm.

If the CARES welfare information system and the State Lottery were isolated cases, it would be bad enough. But this is the tip of the iceberg. There are now literally thousands of professionals who work for the state each year under contract because agencies no longer have the capacity to recruit and retain experienced employees to do the work.

The inefficiency of this practice is mind-boggling.

"I'm not supposed to tell anyone how much they're paying me. Let's just say I'd never earn that much if I was still working for the state."

(Name withheld), former state employee
now working at a state agency for a private contractor

The Solution

The chronic recruitment and retention problems among state professional employees is *Wisconsin's Quiet Crisis* because it occurs out of public view. Up until now, state personnel managers and supervisors have complained, but only to higher-ups. The Department of Employment Relations and the Administration privately acknowledge the problem but ignore the solution.

The result is mind-boggling waste and inefficiency. And, Wisconsin's taxpayers end up paying more for less.

By bringing the problem to light, the Wisconsin Professional Employees Council hopes to make this quiet crisis a public issue. We hope that the media, the public and political leaders will face up to the problem and take quick and decisive steps to solve it.

The solution is simple, straightforward good personnel management.

As we have shown, the state has all the information necessary to address the problem. The Department of Employment Relations needs to use their own data to identify those job classifications with "alarming" recruitment and retention problems and chronic pay range compression problems.

They then need to use the Department of Workforce Development's extensive data base to determine how much the private sector and other government agencies are paying for comparable work in Wisconsin.

And, finally, the Administration needs to make a commitment to bringing state professional employees' pay in line with their private and other public sector counterparts.

"(Name withheld) used to work with me at DNR. He says I'm crazy for staying. Two other top people left this year. That's out of a unit of eight people."

Greg D.
DNR Real Estate Agent

Footnotes

¹ The Wisconsin Department of Employment Relations produces monthly reports with a listing of employees in the Fiscal & Staff unit, which includes approximately 3,900 state professional employees in job categories such as computer programmers, planning analysts and training officers. The DER also produces a report listing former employees who have left state service. The turnover rate analysis presented here matches the list of people who were employed in any of the 3,900 jobs in the first month of the calendar year to the list of those who had left state service during the year. The number that is not still employed in the last month is then divided by the number that was employed in the first month to compute an annual turnover rate.

There are 232 individual job categories within the Fiscal & Staff unit. The following table is for five of the larger categories. The names of the categories in the table are not the same as those used in the state personnel system. "Computer Programmer" in the table is comparable to the state category Information Systems--Pay Range 16; "Computer Systems Analyst" is comparable to Information Systems--Pay Range 17; "Program Analyst" is comparable to Program & Planning Analyst--Range 15; "Senior Program Analyst" is comparable to Program & Planning Analyst--Pay Range 16; "Senior Training Officer" is comparable to the state category Training Officer 3.

Table A: Annual percentage turnover in selected professional jobs.

<i>Job Category</i>	<i>1995</i>	<i>1996</i>
Computer Programmer	12.3	16.2
Computer Systems Analyst	14.8	30.0
Program Analyst	6.3	12
Senior Program Analyst	18.7	14.3
Senior Training Officer	21.4	28.6

² Comments by state personnel specialist Michael Soehner, October 30, 1995.

³ Department of Revenue analysis, 1995.

⁴ Every two years, the Department of Workforce Development (formerly DILHR) conducts an exhaustive survey of wages in the state. The 1997 survey sample consisted of over 18,000 employers selected by industry and size. The occupations used are categorized into four industry sectors: Private Industry with 250+ employees, All Private Industry, Local Government & School Districts, and State Government. Occupations are compared across industries based on definitions of corresponding jobs found in the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles*.

The DWD produces several reports based on the survey. The following Table B is based on a report entitled *1997 Wisconsin Wage Survey Public vs. Private Sector Wages*. Copies of the full report are available from the Department of Administration, Document Sales Unit, at (608) 266-3358.

Table B compares average wages for selected job categories in state government to their counterparts in large private industry and to local government and school districts. Data are taken directly from Table 1. of the 1997 report cited above.

Table B: Average wages for selected job categories for state, private sector and local government employees

<i>Job Category</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Private</i>	<i>Local</i>
Computer Programmer	\$14.36	\$15.46	\$17.61
Computer Systems Analyst	14.39	20.24	19.00
Data Administrator	19.90	20.61	23.38
Paralegal	13.00	15.73	*
Planner	16.69	18.35	18.17
Trainer	16.83	18.05	*

* indicates there was an insufficient number of jobs included in the survey sample in these categories to yield a statistically valid result.

⁵ WPEC survey of comparable government and private sector real estate specialists in surrounding states, April, 1995.

⁶ Data for this section are from the Department of Workforce Development's 1997 Wage Survey Public vs. Private Sector Wages, Table 4, Page 19. See Footnote 4, above, for an explanation of the survey methodology and for information on how to obtain the full report.

⁷ Chart D in the text is based on the figures in Table D, below.

Table D: Increase in state employee average wages lags behind increase in private sector wages and inflation.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Average weekly wages</i>				<i>Consumer Price Index</i>	
	<i>State wage</i>	<i>Percent increase</i>	<i>Private wage</i>	<i>Percent increase</i>	<i>CPI Level</i>	<i>Percent increase</i>
1996	619	4.6	526	7.3	157.4	5.9
1994	592	-2.8	490	2.1	148.6	5.3
1992	609	5.9	480	12.9	141.1	7.1
1990	575	-	425	-	131.7	-

The source of these wage data is the Department of Workforce Development, *Employment and Wages covered by Wisconsin's UC Law*, Table 202. Each quarterly "202 Report" includes the average weekly wage for the prior three months for all employees covered by the Unemployment Insurance system. To control for seasonality, Table D uses the fourth quarter of each year, 1990, 1992, 1994 and 1996. Data for 1997 are not yet available.

The Consumer Price Index is from the U.S. Department of Labor, <http://stats.bls.gov/cpifact3>.

⁸ Survey conducted by the Wisconsin Professional Employees Council of Program and Planning Analysts, April, 1995.

⁹ A number of news stories appeared about the CARES scandal over the years. For example, see "Union shifts job fight," *The Capital Times*, February 7, 1996; "Union sues state over contract for welfare data," *Wisconsin State Journal*, April 2, 1996.

¹⁰ Legislative Audit Bureau, *Wisconsin Lottery: an Evaluation Report 97-2*, March, 1997.