



Domestic Partner Benefits Removed from Budget

Unfortunately, the Co-Chairs of the Joint Finance Committee also removed the provision to allow domestic partner benefits for all state employees.

In one-on-one meetings with members of the Finance Committee, ASPRO asked legislators to support the provision. At the budget hearings, ASPRO encouraged members to register in favor of the domestic partner provision when they registered to oppose the collective bargaining provision.

ASPRO was surprised when the provision was removed from the budget last week as a policy item because, in meetings with legislators, we repeatedly heard concerns about the COST of the provision.

But, the budget process is far from over. ASPRO and members must remain vigilant and work to get the provision BACK into the budget before it reaches the Governor's desk.

Meeting of the Lobbyists

Earlier this month, ASPRO Lobbyists Janet Swandby and Kathi Kilgore met with the new UW System Lobbyists Jessica Tormey and Grant Huber to explore ways UW System Administration and ASPRO can work together to achieve shared goals.

The meeting was very positive with ASPRO learning about the new perspective Tormey and Huber bring to System leadership as former legislative staffers. We are hopeful that the meeting marks the beginning of an improved working relationship with System.

Victorious in First Budget Battle But No Time to Gloat

The lobbying battle between ASPRO and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and its subsidiaries TAUWP and UFAS, has been waged fiercely in the past month. ASPRO has communicated with legislators every few days poking holes in the AFT arguments for the language in the budget bill which would allow faculty and academic staff to bargain collectively.

ASPRO shared the Resolutions passed by academic staff governance bodies with all legislators. These Resolutions all opposed the collective bargaining language in the budget bill and included actions taken on behalf of the academic staff of the UW Colleges, UW-Stout, UW-La Crosse, UW-Oshkosh, and UW-Madison. ASPRO's communications stressed three points:

- There **is** opposition to the budget language. AFT was touting on **faculty** governance resolutions passed in **2001 and 2002** which backed the "right to choose" collective bargaining.
- The budget language might "not form collective bargaining units" (as claimed by AFT), but it sets very specific standards for how they can be formed, and, specifically **prohibits the academic staff unit from joining together with any faculty unit.**
- The budget language is "**policy**" and **should be removed** from the budget and considered as separate, stand-alone legislation.

Victory

On Friday, April 20, the Co-Chairs of the Joint Committee on Finance, Senator Russ Decker and Representative Kitty Rhoades, announced that agreement had been reached on which items in the budget bill forwarded by Governor Jim Doyle were "policy" and therefore would be removed from the document and not considered by the Committee in its budget deliberations. That list included the UW collective bargaining language.

War is NOT Over

While the first battle has been won by ASPRO, the war is far from over. The language in the budget bill will be introduced as a separate piece of legislation. The bill will be referred to standing committees in the Senate and Assembly. There is no doubt that the Senate Committee will hold a hearing on the new bill. ASPRO will have to demonstrate its opposition to the bill at the hearing.

Without strong opposition, it is likely that the Senate Democrats will include the UW collective bargaining language in the budget bill that will be passed by the Senate sometime in June. This would mean that the issue of UW collective bargaining would still be "on the table" as an item for negotiation when the budget goes to Conference Committee this summer.

Perseverance and Thanks

Thanks to all ASPRO members who contacted their legislators about this issue and to those who took a stand as part of academic staff governance. ASPRO will continue to represent the interests of the academic staff as the issue proceeds through the legislative process, and we will keep you posted.

Welcome New Members:

AnnMarie Johnson – Oshkosh
Jaime Reich – Madison

Annette McDaniel – Madison
Lynn Rusch – Madison

Donald Prohaska – La Crosse
Richelle Winkler – Madison