



## Furloughs – Do They Make Sense?

Now that all state employees have been saddled with forced furloughs, many academic staff appear to have accepted them as another not-so-pleasant fact of life. ASPRO's member survey revealed, however, that researchers across the UW System feel strongly that the furloughs should not be imposed on those employees whose salaries are paid by outside funding. ASPRO members who are researchers have forcefully argued that the furloughs have had a measurable negative impact on the research enterprise.

Earlier this year, Representative Kelda Roys of Madison attempted to insert language in the biennial budget bill to assure that furloughs were imposed only when they made financial sense. That effort was not successful, but in November, Representative Roys introduced Assembly Bill 551 - the "Smart Furlough" bill. In her [press release](#), Roys noted that her bill would make exemptions to the current blanket furlough law by:

- Exempting positions that are not funded by state dollars, like federally funded researchers.
- Exempting workers from furloughs if their shifts must be backfilled at overtime rates.

**AB 551 is expected to have a public hearing later this month.** ASPRO will register its support for AB 551 at the hearing, but we would **like to have ASPRO members who feel strongly about this measure testify** as well. Please let us know if you would like to attend the hearing and testify in favor of the "Smart Furlough" bill by emailing us at [aspro@aspro.net](mailto:aspro@aspro.net).

## Unit Clarification – Unionization without a Vote

By now, you should have heard that the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) filed three unit clarification petitions with the Wisconsin Employment Relations Commission (WERC). The petitions seek to re-classify more than 120 academic staff employees at six institutions. Although the petitions target these employees, the position titles would cover more than 880 academic staff members across the UW System.

Unit clarification is a process that attempts to move academic staff members into the classified service, automatically assigning them to a union without any vote by the affected employees.

ASPRO opposes unit clarification because:

- Academic staff members would lose the shared governance rights guaranteed by Wisconsin law. Other state employees do not have these rights.
- Academic staff would become members of a union (and be moved to the classified service) without the opportunity to vote on whether they would prefer to be a union member.

The UW System has announced that it will ask WERC to dismiss the petitions. ASPRO is coordinating with the System administration on this issue.

## Thanks for the Feedback

The ASPRO Board thanks all of you who took the time to complete the member survey. We are pleased with the response rate as 41% of ASPRO members completed the survey. The results were very enlightening and will guide ASPRO's efforts for the next year. We will provide more detail about the results of the survey in the next newsletter.

As always, feel free to let us know what's on your mind by emailing ASPRO at [aspro@aspro.net](mailto:aspro@aspro.net).