

For Immediate Release: January 13, 2011

Contact:

Sen. Glenn Grothman – 608-266-7513

Sen. Alberta Darling – 608-266-5830

Rep. Robin Vos – 608-266-9171

Rep. Steve Nass – 608-266-5715

Public employee union trying to force unionization of UW

Madison – Today, a group of state legislators announced they will introduce legislation to prevent the Wisconsin Employment Relations Commission (WERC) from ordering UW System faculty and staff into a collective bargaining unit.

The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and Wisconsin State Employees Union (WSEU) last year petitioned WERC to force UW workers into their unions against their will. **Sen. Glenn Grothman (R-West Bend), Sen. Alberta Darling (R-River Hills), Rep. Robin Vos (R-Rochester), and Rep. Steve Nass (R-Whitewater)** announced today they will introduce legislation to prevent WERC from doing so.

“I’m shocked that in this day and age in a free country a union could so brazenly force someone to join against their will,” said Grothman. “We wouldn’t drag someone into a church they disagreed with, or force someone to join a political party. One wonders about the AFT’s ethics.”

“I’m not sure these unions should be collectively bargaining on behalf of anybody,” Grothman said.

“This was a typical over-reaction by bureaucrats forcing workers to join a union. Our proposal will give them real choices,” Vos said.

The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and Wisconsin State Employees Union (WSEU) petitioned the Wisconsin Employment Relations Commission (WERC) last year to reclassify dozens of positions, potentially covering thousands of UW employees, so those employees would automatically become union members. The UW and those employees have vehemently opposed the move.

In March, the Academic Staff Executive Committee (ASEC) passed a resolution opposing the forced unionization, citing the “fundamental right to choose whether or not to be represented by a union.” In addition, the resolution points out that “approval of the petitions would also set a precedent for denying the right to choose to any UW-Madison academic staff member.”

Heather Daniels, ASEC chair and an academic staffer, said that employees would actually lose influence by being forced into the union. "Academic staff would lose shared governance rights if they become classified staff," Daniels said. "Shared governance is the right of academic staff to be included in decision making for the University."

Other UW staff are just as unhappy with the idea.

"When I recently asked an AFT rep about their justification for unit clarification, I was told that 'the UW played fast and loose with hiring' when they placed me, and many others, into the Academic Staff positions" said Mike Pagel, Coordinator of New Student Services at UW-Stevens Point. "Seems to me that they are playing fast and loose with their attempts to swell their ranks. If they ever looked at my job description, they'd be hard pressed to argue that my job is not unique to higher education."

Some job titles that could be forced into the union include student service and public relations personnel, psychologists, and even assistant directors of athletics.