

Employee Benefits Programs Committee
August 25, 2008

Human Resource Mgmt Svcs
Office of Management & Budget

Consistency and jurisdiction of statutes, administrative rules, policies, etc. among various agencies and institutions in state government.

In past legislative sessions, the legislature has made the express policy decision that some agency operations have different needs and requirements. Those differences led to expressly allowing those entities to administer their own human resource operating policies outside the state HR system. Specific agencies are:

- Institutions of Higher Education
- ND Mill & Elevator
- Workforce Safety & Insurance
- Dept of Commerce

Adopting completely uniform policy in the areas being discussed seems to conflict with the prior legislative action. It is certainly appropriate to clarify the authority of state entities to establish programs in the area of service awards, tuition payments, licenses/certifications, and membership dues policies.

Employee Service Awards

- The state should clearly provide authority for all entities to establish such a program
- Putting detail into statute to include the incremental dollar values would make it much more difficult to periodically update the program

Employer Paid Tuition Assistance

- Current programs in executive agencies are primarily for the benefit of the agency rather than intended as an employee benefit
- Agencies use tuition assistance to develop current employees & for succession planning
 - Fill needed skills when qualified applicants cannot be found because of salary, geographic issues, or simply a lack of qualified candidates
 - Enhances skills of current employees who are 'known performers' instead of taking risks with new recruits
 - Enhances retention of good employees who feel loyalty when the agency has invested in their future

Enabling legislative could emphasize that the basis for such programs must be for the benefit of the state. Agencies offering tuition assistance have policies that define their program and the eligibility requirements.

There are several specific tuition programs currently in statute: National Guard, DOT.

Employer Paid Membership Dues for Professional Organizations or Service Clubs

This area is wide-ranging. The common thread, like the previously mentioned programs, is that the payment is primarily for the benefit of the state.

- Zoo and local service club memberships got a lot of publicity when originally reported. When explained that they are providing legitimate service to clients or promotion of state programs or state parks in local communities it becomes accepted.
- Professional licenses are either required to do the work (social work, pharmacy, nursing, etc.) or desirable to demonstrate certain levels of knowledge and proficiency (cpa, sphr). There is significant benefit to the state for such licenses or certifications.
- Professional Membership Dues are generally organizations that provide significant resources to their members.
 - As an example, the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) provides volumes of reference material, publications discussing current issues, extensive training to keep member skills current with trends, and opportunities for professional networking.

Again, enabling legislation could emphasize that the payment must be for the primary benefit of the state.