



NORTH DAKOTA
PUBLIC EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION

3333 EAST BROADWAY AVE, SUITE 1220
BISMARCK, NORTH DAKOTA 58501-3396

701-223-1964
1-800-472-2698

AMERICAN FEDERATION
OF TEACHERS LOCAL 4660 AFL-CIO



EMAIL: comments@ndpea.org
WEBSITE: www.ndpea.org

Comments Concerning Administrative Leave Program
Before the Employee Benefits Programs Committee
Stuart Savelkoul, Executive Director, NDPEA
July 21, 2010

Good morning Chairman Grande and members of the committee. My name is Stuart Savelkoul and I am the Executive Director of the North Dakota Public Employee Association. I am here today representing the interests of public employees across the state of North Dakota. This study is meant to consider the feasibility and desirability of an administrative leave program for state employees to attend legislative hearings, grievance meetings, disciplinary hearings, labor and management meetings, negotiating sessions, or other meetings of a similar nature. In short, I intend to demonstrate through my testimony that such a proposal is indeed feasible and is desired a great deal by those who would utilize such a program.

I think that the benefits of this bill are numerous and that the static fiscal cost to the state, should such a plan be implemented, would be minimal. The fact is that state employees are state government. NDPEA is an association whose members simply want to participate in the discussions that impact their livelihood. To that end, NDPEA provides a service to the state of North Dakota. When our governor wanted input from our state's public employees when putting together a budget proposal, he worked with NDPEA. When you, as legislators, are curious as to how a particular policy or proposal will be received by public employees, you work with NDPEA.

North Dakota has nearly 15,000 state employees. They work at places like the NDSU in Fargo and Dickinson State University on the west side of the state. They work at the State Developmental Center in Grafton and right here in the Capitol building, and our association strives to represent the interests of all of them.

I feel it necessary to point out that precedent for a program like this extends beyond the fact that many other states afford this privilege to their public employees, states such as Montana, Minnesota, Alaska, and Kansas. Employees in the field of education and medicine are afforded compensation to do work for their respective professional organizations while being compensated by their primary employer. Actually, any employee is able ask his supervisor for paid leave to go testify at the legislature on a bill that would impact his livelihood. That is, unless that employee works for the state. This bill would grant the supervisors of state employees the latitude to approve such action.

A program of this nature encourages shared governance where employees are given a voice in workplace issues and in the development of policies and procedures. It is widely believed that people support what they help to create. Therefore, shared governance has positive effect on employee morale which should lead to a decrease in turnover and an increase in productivity. A program like this would encourage a more community-centered work environment where employees feel they have a greater stake in the success of their coworkers and the agency that they work for.

Chairman Grande and members of the committee, a small amount of paid leave would not carry a significant fiscal note. It would not make any headlines in the Tribune, the Forum, or the Herald. But to our state employees, it would mean a great deal. Programs like this exist in our surrounding states. Programs like this increase employee buy-in and increase employee efficiency and productivity. Finally, programs like this increase parity between employees in the private and public sector. I urge the committee to support such a program.

Thank you for your time, and I will now stand for any questions that you might have.

Quality Services from Quality People

Testimony