

## Civil service is key to democracy

Looking back over this pandemic, it is clear how important basic public services are to our recovery. These are services that must not be left to the market, including distributing protective equipment, pandemic aid, COVID-19 tests and vaccines.

Public agencies must provide oversight. With more money flowing into these agencies to meet these needs, it is more important than ever to install strong protections against corruption and cronyism in state agencies. This is precisely the function of the Wisconsin civil service system. Civil service creates an atmosphere that encourages public services to be made available to all residents equally. It also works against partisan influence in public programs.

Wisconsin's civil service system was created by a bill signed

into law 116 years ago on June 17. But the civil service system has been weakened by changes in recent years, including our Legislature's decision to end civil service exam requirements in 2016.

If we want efficiency, effectiveness and accountability in state programs, then we must strengthen the civil service in Wisconsin. It is a basic building block of democracy.

**Linda Hilker, Cross Plains**

## Civil servants are essential workers

Reference to "essential workers" has come up frequently during the pandemic. The state of Wisconsin employs many essential workers who have continued to perform in-person, onsite work and often 24/7 during the last year.

They work in prisons and cor-

rectional facilities, mental health and medical facilities, and parks and recreation areas. They patrol highways, process unemployment claims, manage computer and information systems, investigate crimes, and provide driver and motor vehicle licenses. They are doctors, nurses, nursing assistants, attorneys, engineers and environmental workers. During the pandemic many worked overtime.

Today is the 116th anniversary of the Wisconsin civil service system, which ensures hiring according to merit and defines working conditions. The Coalition to Save Civil Service will be holding an event at noon at the "forum" space at the top of State Street to pay respect to these state employees who perform so many essential tasks that we sometimes take for granted.

**Sally Drew, Madison, president, Association of Career Employees**