



# ACE Newsletter

## October 2022

### **ACE recommended person appointed to the ETF Board**

Last year, the Association of Career Employees (ACE) learned, that there were two long-term vacancies on the Wisconsin Retirement System Board, one to represent state employees and the other a public member who is not a participant or beneficiary of the WRS. After filling these vacant positions, the Wisconsin Retirement Board would be able to appoint either the public employee or the public member to fill a vacancy on the Employee Trust Fund Board.

Angela Miller was appointed to fill the position of participating state employee and Christie Lynn Schwann and to fill the position of public member on the Wisconsin Retirement Board. ACE has now learned that Angela Miller was also appointed to the Employee Trust Fund Board. The ACE Board is pleased that we were successful in helping fill these long vacant positions with highly qualified people.

## **Ventilation standards in state office buildings**

Improvement of indoor air quality has been spotlighted as a key factor in reducing the risks of Covid transmission and has been a major concern for employees considering returning to a physical workspace. ACE wrote to Paula Veltum, Division Administrator, Department of Administration (DOA), Division of Facilities & Transportation Services (DFTS) to request information on what the Division of Facilities and Transportation Services is doing to monitor and improve Indoor air quality in all buildings, leased or state-owned, where state employees work. ACE noted that the DFTS had posted on their website the Clean Air in Buildings Challenge from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and information from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) on Ventilation in Buildings and wanted to find out how much progress had been made to meet these standards.

Paula Veltum's responses to ACE question are below:

*Are MERV-13 air filters required in all buildings where state employees work? If that is not the case, is the Division working toward an installation plan?*

- All air handlers have the highest MERV rated filters allowable for the unit. For the majority of tenant occupied buildings, filters are MERV 13 and above. Air handlers that cannot accommodate MERV13 rated filters are or will be outfitted with UV-C filtration. Air handlers that exceed their anticipated lifecycle are incorporated in building modernization studies to increase MERV ratings where possible.

*Are portable air cleaners being installed to increase air cleaning rates in areas where air flow and central filtration are currently insufficient?*

- Use of portable air cleaners provided by agencies has been permitted. DOA has increased air flow where possible, extended operational hours of air handling units, and has begun installation of UV-C filtration in facilities.

*Are HVAC systems in the buildings run at least two hours prior to state employee arrival and at least two hours after close of business?*

- Yes, HVAC systems run at least 2 hours before anticipated state employee arrival, during custodial cleaning, and after anticipated custodian departure.

*Are employees permitted to open windows, when weather and safety conditions allow, to increase outdoor air flow?*

- Windows in State facilities are not operable so that HVAC systems operate as designed.

*Is the fan operation on the HVAC systems set to run continuously, even when heating or air-conditioning is not required?*

- Yes.

*Does the Division require each building in which state employees work to have an indoor air quality action plan that includes regular inspections and maintenance, including filter replacements, and HVAC system upgrades or improvements as needed?*

- Yes. Filters are inspected daily and are replaced every 3 to 6 months. Indoor air quality readings are taken at least quarterly. Results are well below the allowable PPM of CO<sub>2</sub>. The HVAC system is regularly inspected and undergoes preventative maintenance to ensure it is operating as intended. DOA Controls, Trades, and Building staff make repairs as needed and improvements as identified.

## **The Division of Personnel Management (DPM) raised minimum salaries for non-broadband, non-professional positions in State service.**

ACE has long urged the state to raise the minimum wage for all employees above \$15.00 per hour. On August 11, 2022, DPM replaced DPM-0570-CC/PP (released February 24, 2022) on Raised Minimum Rates (RMRs) with Classification and Compensation bulletin DPM-0582-CC/PP pursuant to s. 230.12, Wis. Stats. to establish raised minimum rates (RMRs) for recruiting, hiring, and retaining employees. DPM is authorized to do this when competitive labor market conditions have been evaluated and the minimum rate is determined to be below the market rate for a class or subtitle for a classification, or when a class or subtitle for a classification has unique requirements

and it is unlikely that quality applicants would be available under such conditions.

This bulletin applied to non-broadband and non-professional positions in Wisconsin civil service. Approximately 250 classifications were affected, many paying more than \$15 per hour. Funding for any increases would come from agency budgets. Most Wisconsin state agencies have high numbers of vacancies, and it is hoped that this policy change provides sufficient leeway to pay for increased wages and will improve the likelihood of being able to hire new employees to fill vacancies. This increase is about 20% over previous hiring minimums and raises the pay of about 80% of the employees in the affected classifications. It is likely that some wage compression will occur between newly hired and existing employees.

Bulletin DPM-0582-CC-PP can be found [HERE](#).

## State Employee Political Activity

Election season is in high gear, and it is important to know what rules apply to state employee political activity.

The following is an abbreviated list of political activities in which classified state employees may and may not engage, taken from the DOA Division of Personnel Management's August 5, 2022, bulletin on State Employee Political Activity. Click [HERE](#) for the full and more detailed list.

Permissible activities:

- Making voluntary contributions for political purposes.
- Expressing opinions as an individual privately or publicly on political subjects and candidates.
- Parking an automobile bearing partisan political signs and/or stickers in state parking areas while on duty at a state workstation.
- Being a member of a political party.
- Participating in party affairs and engaging in political activities, provided the employee is off duty and not on state property.

State employees may engage in most political activities provided they are not done during work time or on state property, with one notable exception. Employees whose positions are "principally

connected with federally-funded programs are prohibited from running for partisan political office, and other state employees are required to take a leave of absence to do so. Employees may run for part-time, non-partisan office, provided this does not interfere with their state job duties.

See the DOA bulletin for examples.

Prohibited activities:

- Engaging in political activity on state-owned property or on state time including, but not limited to, wearing of any form of political identification or
- Taking actions calculated to favor any political party or candidate.
- Soliciting or receiving contributions for any political party or purpose while on state time or in a state building or office.
- Using state property, materials, supplies or equipment in connection with political activity.
- Using any governmental authority or position for political purposes.

Questions relating to the political activities of classified state employees should be directed to James Feldhausen at [James.feldhausen@wisconsin.gov](mailto:James.feldhausen@wisconsin.gov).

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