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**[NOTE TO REPORTERS: AN ELECTRONIC COPY
OF THE LAWSUIT IS AVAILABLE FROM SEA]**

**PUBLIC ENGINEERS SEEK INJUNCTION AGAINST
STATE OF WISCONSIN IN WAKE OF LAY-OFFS**

MADISON, WI – The State Engineering Association (SEA), a bargaining unit for more than 1,100 engineering employees, today filed a lawsuit against the State of Wisconsin, seeking an injunction to halt layoffs structured so that the state can recoup unemployment compensation benefits to which the engineers are legally entitled.

The suit, filed in Dane County Circuit Court, seeks an injunction to prevent further implementation of a directive issued by the Office of State Employment Relations (OSER) to all agencies that employ engineering and technical staff represented by SEA.

The lawsuit is filed against the OSER and all the agencies that employ SEA bargaining-unit employees. Department heads are also named in the lawsuit.

SEA members are employed by more than a dozen State of Wisconsin agencies and the University of Wisconsin system. Many of the employees work at the departments of Transportation and Natural Resources.

The state directive requires that all SEA-represented employees be laid off for nine consecutive days during each fiscal year of the 2009-2011 budget biennium. The directive is structured so that the state can recoup any unemployment compensation benefits to which the employees are entitled during the layoff.

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For Wisconsin State Employees Engaged In The Profession Of Engineering

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The lawsuit says the state's decision forces the employees to effectively and unlawfully pay for their own unemployment benefits. Under the law, a worker cannot be forced to pay for his or her own unemployment benefits by having their wages reduced via a layoff specifically imposed for that purpose. SEA said the Department of Workforce Development, charged with the responsibility of administering the unemployment compensation laws, is violating the same laws if it complies with OSER's mandate.

Other state employees are being placed by executive order on furlough for eight days per year. SEA-represented employees are not subject to furlough under the terms of their collective bargaining agreement with the state.

When SEA refused to agree to furloughs in the face of the state's ongoing refusal to bargain in good faith for a 2007-2009 collective bargaining agreement, the state decided to impose layoffs of longer duration than the proposed furloughs, in order to cover the anticipated cost of unemployment compensation benefits. SEA's 2007-2009 contract agreement remains unresolved.

SEA said it also opposes the continued use of private consulting firms at significantly higher cost to the taxpayer. SEA-represented state employees costing 20 to 40 percent less than consultants are being placed on layoff status. At the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, these layoffs have been implemented during the busiest time of the year, when the department is in the process of completing and closing out the projects for the 2009 construction season.

The furloughs and layoffs are occurring under circumstances that SEA said will increase the need for the state to pay overtime to some employees.

SEA noted that work cut-backs affect state employees whose wages are federally funded, thereby reducing federal dollars flowing into the state, and state tax revenues generated by such earnings. SEA said the cuts will also cause significant inconvenience and delays in the delivery of public services.

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