

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

The annual meeting is a time to recap the past year's events/issues and prepare ourselves for the coming year. There were many events this past year that effected SEA. SEA responded to some issues with news releases and communications with legislators and the Governor. The future holds many unresolved issues such as bargaining, layoffs, employee retention, and privatization.

Bargaining began again after more than a year of waiting for the state to come back to the table; of course, we now know that even with everyone is in attendance, nothing is getting accomplished. We have written to the Joint Committee on Employee Relations expressing our dissatisfaction with bargaining. JCER's response was to remind us that other unions are paying back their health care and once again mention that the state started with a \$3.2 billion deficit. SEA will continue to bargain for a contract that is fair and equitable.

The DOT released its analysis showing that consultant engineers are 18% more expensive than state engineers. SEA has delivered this report along with additional information related to consultant costs directly to the legislators. Of course, there was the disputed DOA report questioning the analysis and a subsequent DOT rebuttal. Then there was the demotion of DOT's chief attorney, Jim Theil and the violation of the open records law by DOT Secretary. All of this along with our own news releases has gotten SEA more press coverage than any other action or event in the past ten years.

The Governor kept his course of the elimination of 10,000 state employees. However, he restored engineering positions to the DOT after numerous unfavorable news reports regarding consultant fees. This restoration was only for the DOT as many other agencies continued to carryout the Governor's campaign promise. SEA will continue to inform the Governor and the legislature that this is poor policy.

A bill was written to reform the state's contractual services by requiring a cost benefit analysis. SEA worked with legislators in revising the language in this proposal to include all state agencies. This bill has currently passed the Assembly and is headed for a vote in the Senate. SEA will be involved with this bill until it passes the legislature and is passed to the Governor for his signature. Some have rumored that this bill will be vetoed because the Governor has his own fix for agency accountability.

The fleet audit was finally completed with mixed results. It concluded that the state has a mismanaged fleet. It never looked at the cost to operate a state vehicle or the cost to operate a personal vehicle. This audit was asked for by SEA over a year ago. That state seemed to be stalling but finally completed it. SEA will continue to ask for the federal reimbursement rate for use of a personal vehicle.

SEA had another successful SEA Day in April. There were around 80 members who made contacts with legislators at the capitol. The Wisconsin Rapids section had the most members attend. SEA Day allows SEA members the opportunity for personal contact with the lawmakers. This personal contact with your legislator also puts a face with the lawmakers. It shows the policy makers that their decisions/policies/proposals have consequences that effect real people. SEA will continue these events in the future.

What to expect in the coming year for SEA? I would like to look to the positive. SEA should be able to settle our 2003-2005 contract with the help from its members. With increased frustration, more members will contact their legislators regarding the frustrations and write letters to media with examples of government waste and inefficiencies mandated by the current administration. The state will be forced to address the low employee moral, the employee retention issues, and impossibility of hiring new engineers at such low wages. Agency management will feel the pressure from employees and pass this along to the Administration. The Governor will finally get the message that state employees have value and will compensate us for that value.

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