

**E-mailed to PSO listserv and cc:'s on January 19, 2007:**

Greetings,

The PSO Executive Committee was recently contacted by the Public School Employees of Washington (PSE) union informing us that they have drafted legislation to enable professional (exempt) staff at all the institutions of higher education in Washington State to unionize. As you are aware, under current law professional (exempt) staff are prohibited from unionizing. The proposed legislation (HB 1399) is currently under consideration by legislators in Olympia, and according to PSE has received support from several legislators, as well as from the Washington Federation of State Employees (WFSE) and Washington Public Employees Association (WPEA) unions. PSE is in the process of contacting the various professional staff organizations at the University of Washington (UW), Central Washington University (CWU), and here at Western Washington University seeking support and help in lobbying for this proposed legislation. Information regarding this bill and the text can be found at <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=1399&year=2007>

Since being contacted the PSO Executive Committee has met to discuss this and after much deliberation has decided to oppose this proposed legislation. We do not believe that a unionized form of representation is applicable to our constituent group given our role, as described in the PSO Handbook Preamble, "As a distinct group of leaders and managers within the organization, providing essential organizational services to faculty, students, and classified staff in pursuit of WWU's educational objectives." In essence we are the institution's day-to-day administrative arm, "develop(ing) and direct(ing) the institution's operations and programs." We are the "management" that unions negotiate with on behalf of the employees they represent. Moreover, we currently enjoy a professional and collegial relationship with administration that we believe will be undermined by unionizing, creating instead an adversarial relationship to the detriment of our members, administration, and to our role in the university's overarching mission.

While the PSO Committee opposes this legislation, we also recognize that unions provide a valuable service to certain classifications of employees, representing their interests and through the collective bargaining process, obtaining numerous benefits for them. In some cases unionization could benefit certain types of professional staff. For example at UW where most of their professional staff hold research positions, this option could be of direct benefit to them. We are also aware that here at Western some PSO members are concerned that we are now the only constituent group that is not unionized. As a result there is the perception that our representation and interests within the university's governance structure may become compromised over time. This proposed legislation, if passed, would provide the option to unionize should we or the professional staff at the other institutions elect to do so in the future.

The PSO Executive Committee will track the progress of this proposed legislation as part of our responsibility to be involved in all matters that affect the interests of our membership. We welcome your questions, comments, and suggestions regarding this issue to our Outlook account at [PSO@wwu.edu](mailto:PSO@wwu.edu). We also encourage the use of our [psolist@lists.wwu.edu](mailto:psolist@lists.wwu.edu) listserv as a mechanism to communicate your comments and suggestions with the rest of the membership. Should the PSO membership direct us to take a more active role we will do so.

The PSO Executive Committee

c: Karen Morse, President, Western Washington University  
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