

Personnel Monthly

State Personnel Department

The State Personnel Board Considers Change to the Layoff Rule in an Effort to Save Merit System Jobs

“For as much as government can do and must do, it is ultimately the faith and determination of the American people upon which this nation relies. It is the kindness to take in a stranger when the levees break, the selflessness of workers who would rather cut their hours than see a friend lose their job which sees us through our darkest hours.” – President Barack Obama, Inaugural Address, January 20, 2009.

Payroll costs are the largest single expense for most employers. When budget shortfalls require expenses to be cut, employers must look at ways to reduce personnel costs. Employees across the nation are being laid off in staggering numbers. Employees of the State of Alabama are no exception. Since January 1st of this year, three agencies have submitted plans to layoff Merit System employees and many more agencies have requested information on the layoff process. The only layoff procedure currently available to a State agency requires positions to be abolished, thus resulting in the permanent loss of Merit System jobs. Laid off employees suffer not only the loss of income, but also the loss of health insurance, sick leave, and other valuable benefits. Many states have been exploring options that would save employee jobs while reducing payroll costs. After an extensive research of options, a proposal was made to the State Personnel Board to amend the layoff portion of the State Personnel Board Rules to allow for a layoff through a temporary layoff or Temporary Reduction in Force (TRIF). A TRIF will provide an alternative to the abolition of positions by an agency confronted with extraordinary funding shortages. A TRIF not only saves the

jobs and benefits of Merit System employees, but allows agencies to reduce costs in connection with mandated budget cuts by temporarily reducing both work schedules and pay. A public hearing on the proposed adoption of the TRIF amendment will be held before the State Personnel Board on March 11, 2009. No decision by the State Personnel Board will be made until that time.

A common misconception regarding layoffs is that only the newest employees or those with less than 10 years of State service will be affected by a layoff. That is not correct. Currently, an agency has the authority to determine the classifications subject to the layoff procedure. In some layoff plans, entire classifications or a majority of positions in a classification are abolished, resulting in the layoff of employees with lengthy state service. Employees may be “rolled back” to lower classifications, transferred to other locations or cities, or suffer the loss of their jobs, insurance, and benefits. In a layoff which occurred within the last few weeks, an employee within one year of retirement was laid off. Layoffs through job abolishment are devastating for the affected employees and alternatives must be available.

Major provisions of the proposed rule are briefly summarized as follows:

1. A proposal to implement a TRIF can only be made by an individual agency; a TRIF cannot be imposed as a blanket, statewide application across all agencies.
2. A TRIF is limited to a maximum of one (1) day per semi-monthly pay period. An agency may determine that a TRIF is necessary one day a month, one day every three months, or even one day per fiscal year, etc.
3. An employee who is in TRIF status will be considered “in full pay status” for leave accrual, health insurance, and other seniority related benefit purposes. Though an employee is on a reduced work schedule, leave will continue to accrue at the employee’s normal rate, insurance coverage will be maintained without additional cost, and other seniority related benefits will not change.
4. A TRIF plan submitted by an agency cannot be implemented until reviewed and accepted by the State Personnel Director. Before a TRIF plan will be accepted, an agency must have exhausted other means of reducing costs. For example, a TRIF plan may not be accepted if an agency is purchasing new vehicles, remodeling offices, traveling unnecessarily, or making other expenditures which cannot be justified while proposing a layoff for any duration.
5. An employee must be provided 10 working days notice of the TRIF, along with reasons for the TRIF.
6. A TRIF may be agency-wide, by classification, or by classification series within an agency. An agency may not limit TRIF to those indi-

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Special points of interest:

- **State Personnel Training Schedule**
- **Donated Leave Requests: Your fellow State employees need your help!**
- **The State Personnel Board will meet February 18, 2009.**

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Saving Merit System Jobs, Continued

viduals who work in a particular area or division. For example, an agency cannot TRIF employees who work in the Montgomery Central office, but exclude employees in the same classification who work in the Birmingham office. Rather, if a TRIF is implemented agency-wide or by a classification, then all employees in the agency or the classification in that agency will be subject to the same reduced schedule.

Whether you agree or disagree with the proposed rule, the State Personnel Board would like to hear from you. Please send your written comments to the State Personnel Department, Attn: Proposed Rule Change at 64 North Union Street, Suite 316, Montgomery, Alabama 36130 no later than March 9, 2009. Additionally, the proposed rule is scheduled for a public hearing on March 11, 2009 at 10:00 a.m. at the above address. Please submit any requests to speak at the hearing in the same manner as written com-

ments.

Neither the State Personnel Board nor the State Personnel Department advocates the use of layoffs whether through a temporary reduction in force or through the abolishment of positions. During these difficult economic times, it is the primary goal of a TRIF to give State agencies the means, when possible, to let State employees remain State employees.

Personnel Training Schedule—February 2009

The seminars listed below are being offered in February. All training offered by Personnel is free to the employee and the agency. For more information visit the State Personnel Department website at www.personnel.state.al.us. To register for a class, please see your agency's training coordinator. We look forward to seeing you in class!

February 4-5 and February 11-12:

"Train the Trainer: The Basics" in Montgomery

February 10:

"Interview and Selection" in Montgomery

February 19:

"Employment Law for Supervisors" in Montgomery

February 24:

"Interview and Selection" in Montgomery

February 25:

"Sexual Harassment Prevention" morning program in Montgomery

February 25:

"Sexual Harassment Prevention" afternoon program in Montgomery

February 26:

"Family and Medical Leave Act" morning program in Montgomery

February 26:

"Family and Medical Leave Act" afternoon program in Montgomery



Ask Sharon: WeSave Update

Sharon Massey is employed with the State Personnel Department's Training Program. To submit a work related question to Sharon, please email her at AskSharon@personnel.alabama.gov.

Q: "I haven't heard anything about the WeSave employee discount program in awhile. Could you please update me on any new information?"

A: I am pleased to announce that the WeSave program is going strong! In fact, the latest edition of the WeSave Magazine is expected to be delivered to each agency in early February. Your agency will then be responsible for delivering the magazine to you. The magazine will list participating merchants, gives updates on giveaways and will feature Jade Milliner, WeSave's "Pick Your Ride" winner! Each month more merchants, both local and national, agree to participate in the WeSave program. It is important to visit the WeSave website at www.wesave.com/al to keep up to date and maximize your savings.

Q: "I started working for the State a few months ago, and someone just told me about WeSave. How do I sign up to participate?"

A: If your agency's personnel division has run out of WeSave cards, you may request one online at www.wesave.com/al. On the



homepage, there is a link to sign up. Simply click on the link and complete the form stating that you have not yet received a WeSave card. The card will be mailed to the address that you provide on the form. The WeSave card is an excellent way to save money and we hope that it will serve

as an important reminder of the State's appreciation of your hard work.

Q: "There is a great shop down the street from my office that I would love to sign up for the WeSave program. What can I do to help that happen?"

A: I am so glad that you asked this question. It is important for State employees to take an active role in the WeSave program to ensure that it meets everyone's needs. The best way to recommend a merchant to the program is to go online to the WeSave website, www.wesave.com/al, and click on the "Members" tab. Under the "Members" tab, there is a "Help Us Help You" option on the side bar that you can click to request that WeSave contact a particular merchant. You will be asked to provide the merchant's name and address, as well as a phone number. WeSave will then send a local representative to speak with that merchant. WeSave strives to bring additional savings to each community, and with the help of State employees, they can do it!

One New Year Resolution Made Easy

Article Written By: Tonya Campbell, SEIB Marketing Director

Can you believe how fast 2008 flew by? And we all have those New Year's resolutions, right? Live healthier, eat less, save money, manage our time and family a little more efficiently, etc. The list is endless. Now, thanks to the State Employees Insurance Board (SEIB), maintaining your health just became a lot easier.

As most of you know, the SEIB is in

the process of giving a face-lift to the Worksite Wellness Screenings for State Employees' Health Insurance Plan (SEHIP) members. While we know these screenings have always been convenient, additional enhancements to the Wellness Program will be noticeable in 2009!

In addition to less wait time, a more detailed screening has been designed that will allow nurses to identify underlying health issues that may have previously gone undetected. Our new screenings evaluate your levels of glucose,

hypertension, and cholesterol, and measure your body mass index (BMI). In addition to screening enhancements, SEHIP members who participate in the Wellness Program will be eligible to receive a \$25 discount* on their health insurance premium beginning January 1, 2010.

Details are below to help you understand the Wellness policy and how the policy applies to you. Most importantly, it helps you understand what you need to do to save \$25 in monthly premiums beginning January 1, 2010!

...Attend a Worksite Wellness Screening And Are Determined To Be Not "At Risk"

Your screening information will be forwarded to the SEIB and the monthly premium discount of \$25 will be applied to your contract.

Or:

...Attend a Worksite Wellness Screening And Are Determined To Be "At Risk" For One or More of the Risk Factors And Choose To:

Visit a physician:

You will be given a voucher and screening form to take to your physician. The voucher will waive your office co-pay and the screening form will indicate the steps your physician should take to ensure your discount is applied to your contract. This information should be forwarded to the SEIB to have the discount applied to your contract.

Address the risk factor on your own:

This is a welcome option to most members. If you feel you can control your risk(s) indicated at the Wellness Screening through diet, exercise, etc., that is fine. However, this is the only option where you will be required to show progress in order to continue receiving the discount when you participate in the next wellness screening, within two years.

Or:

...Go Directly To Your Physician

For those of you who visit your physician yearly for your annual check-up, this option is for you. Just be sure to print out the form available on the SEIB web site at www.alseib.org to have your physician complete. Just remember that it's your responsibility to ensure that form is returned to the SEIB by the deadline to receive your discount.

Or:

...Do Nothing

The Wellness Program is a voluntary program. It is the choice of each employee as to whether or not they participate. However, those who choose this option will begin paying the monthly premium of \$25 on January 1, 2010.

For those who choose one of the first three options, to continue receiving your discount, new screening documentation must be received every two years.

*(Example: If screened on November 1, 2009, your monthly premium will be waived for 2010 and 2011. To be eligible for the discount beginning January, 2012, a new screening form should be received on or before November 30, 2011.)***

With this change brings opportunity. Programs like the Weight Watchers at Work® program and discounted memberships with payroll deduction through the YMCA are available to help members maintain healthy lifestyles through diet and exercise. For information on how to coordinate a convenient Weight Watchers meeting in your workplace, please contact Cindy Dyer at (334) 206-5613 or Jonathan Edwards at (334) 206-5605. For additional information on YMCA enrollments, please visit your facility of choice in Montgomery or Elmore

counties. The SEIB is currently in the process of working with other YMCA's statewide to allow discounted memberships at their facilities.

We are excited about bringing such a positive program to all active State employees. In addition to providing convenient wellness screenings in your workplace, this program is bringing awareness to employees who may be unaware of health risks that could affect them directly. Ultimately that is the goal of the SEIB and the intent of this program.

For additional information on this or

any other programs offered through the SEIB, please visit the website at www.alseib.org or call (866) 836-9737.

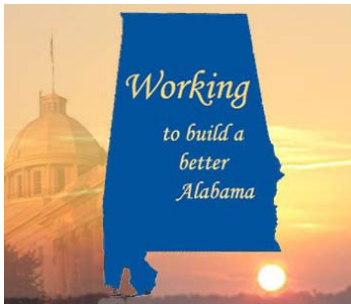
*This premium discount only applies to active state employees. Dependents and retirees are not subject to the additional \$25 premium and subsequently are not eligible for the discount.

** Information must be submitted from the wellness screening on or before November 30 to be eligible for the discount beginning January 1 of the following plan year.

State Personnel Department

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The Alabama Merit System law created the Personnel Department to be administered by a Personnel Director who answers to an independent board. The Board currently consists of five members who serve staggered six-year terms. Two members are appointed by the Governor, one by the Lieutenant Governor, one by the Speaker of the House, and one member is an elected classified state employee who is subject to all merit system rules and regulations.

By law the Board is required to meet once each month. Its principal functions are to:

- *adopt and amend rules and regulations;
*adopt and modify classification and pay plans;
*hear the appeals of employees who have been dismissed;
*represent the taxpayers' interest in the improvement of personnel management in the state; and
*advise and assist the Personnel Director.

The Personnel Department is divided into 9 major areas: Classification and Pay; Examination; Certification; Payroll and Personnel Audit; Information Technology; Training; Legal; Administrative Law Judge; and Special Projects. Please remember, the Personnel Department is here to protect the merit system and to serve as a resource for State employees and the citizens of Alabama!

The State Personnel Board is scheduled to meet on February 18, 2009 at 10 a.m. in the Board Room on the 3rd Floor of the Folsom Administrative Building in Montgomery. The meeting is open to the public.

Donated Leave Requests



To assist those who have qualified for catastrophic sick leave, State Personnel is listing the names of those State employees who are in need of donated leave. The following individuals need your help:

- Lynn Alford with Public Health;
David Allen with Human Resources;
Addie Allen with Public Health;
Donnie Arnold with Pardons & Paroles;
Rachel Babb with Rehabilitation Services;
Percy Barlow with Transportation;
Jennifer Bell with Transportation;
Cassandra Belyeu with Tourism and Travel;
Tammy Boyles with Transportation;
Terry Bozeman with Public Safety;
Jamie Brown with Transportation;
Alan Bryant with Transportation;
JenaAnne Campbell with Corrections;
L'Erin Carlis with Public Safety;
Bessie Carter with Mental Health;
Kissi Coley with Public Health;
Joni Coman with Revenue;
Michael Daniels with Transportation;
Suretta Davis with Public Health;
Velvet Davis with Youth Services;
Kidada Dixon with Transportation;
Cynthia Dominques with Corrections;
Mary Dove with Transportation;
James Farris with Revenue;
Camilla Franklin-Gibson with Education;
Clara Frost with Mental Health;
Jacqueline Gaines with Human Resources;
Kelvin Gary with Corrections;
Kenneth Golson with Finance;
John Gray, Sr. with Transportation;
Mary Joan Greene with Public Health;
Hilary Gresham with Corrections;
Tabitha Grier with Conservation;
Wanda Griffith with Corrections;
Latoria Henderson with Revenue;
Gloria Higgins with Human Resources;
Carly Hill with the Office of the Attorney General;
Danny Huggins with Transportation;
Jessica Ivy with Mental Health;
Wyman Jackson with Corrections;
Karlynn Johnson with Human Resources;
Pamela Johnson with Revenue;
Tammye Johnson with Revenue;
Glenda Johnston with Mental Health;
David Keeton with Industrial Relations;
Dawn Renee Lane with Conservation;
Carmen Leonard with Transportation;
J. Roger Lovelace with Public Health;
Harry Lyles with Transportation;
Joseph Mallard with Transportation;
Joe Marvin, III with Transportation;
Lillian McCray with Mental Health;
Sharon McGill with Revenue;
Lori McInerney with Transportation;
Edwina McKinney-Tate with ABC Board;
Kimbalee McMahon with Human Resources;
Roger Meadows with Corrections;
Walter Mendenhall with Public Safety;
Barbara Mills with Human Resources;
Shannon Mitchell with Public Health;
Elise Moore with Rehabilitation Services;
Chiquita Murrell with Transportation;
Patricia Nelson with Public Safety;
Andrea Northcott with Corrections;
Penni Parker with Mental Health;
Tracy Parks with Human Resources;
Jan Perry with Corrections;
Kathie Peters with Public Health;
Amy Pickett with Industrial Relations;
Regina Portis with Mental Health;
Barbara Pritchett with Human Resources;
Stephanie Reynolds with Mental Health;
John Rhodes with Revenue;
Shenita Rivers with Public Health;
Martha Roberts with Public Health;
Shirley Robinson with Mental Health;
Bonnie Russell with Transportation;
Stephanie Sammons with Transportation;
Jason Sassin with Public Safety;
Stacey Satterfield with Public Health;
Florence Saxton with Transportation;
Sandra Scott with Public Health;
Latoya Shannon with Public Health;
Katherine Sharich with ABC Board;
Dawn Sladek with ABC Board;
Mike Smith with Corrections;
Patricia Smith with Human Resources;
Jacqueline Stokes with Human Resources;
Kimberly Taylor with Public Health;
Joan Thompson with Conservation;
Alma Thorneberry with Public Health;
Carl Thornell with Corrections;
Timothy Townsend with Revenue;
Curtis Walker with Conservation;
Pamela Walker with Revenue;
Kory Ward with Tourism & Travel;
Vercilla Watkins with Education;
Donna Whatley with Education;
Brenda Whetstone with Industrial Relations;
Johnnie Williams with Mental Health; and
Janelle Zeigler with Public Health.

For more information on how to donate leave to one of these individuals, please visit the State Personnel Department website at www.personnel.state.al.us. To donate your leave to a qualified employee, please visit your personnel manager and request a Form 25A or download it from the State Personnel website.