

Attachment 11

# Union seeks 5% raise from state for workers

GOP lawmakers warn that Iowa could face a budget shortfall of \$300 million.

By JONATHAN ROOS  
REGISTER STAFF WRITER

As Iowa faces budget problems, the largest union representing state workers called Wednesday for an across-the-board 5 percent raise in each of the next two years.

State government also would pay a larger share of workers' health insurance premiums and agree to end the use of furloughs under a contract proposed by the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees.

"We've been delivering state services with less workers. That means increased workloads, less time off and more pressure on our members and their families," said Jan Corderman, state president of AFSCME, which represents more than 20,000 state workers.

The union's wage proposal would cost the state more than \$34 million in the next budget year. Boosting the state's share of family

health insurance premiums from 75 percent to 90 percent would create an additional annual expense of more than \$10 million.

Talk of a 5 percent wage increase raised eyebrows among leaders of the Republican-controlled Legislature, who warned that the state could face a budget shortfall of \$300 million or more.

"Everybody's got to start some place, but we've got to deal with how much money is available," said House Majority Leader Chuck Gipp of Decorah.

Gov. Tom Vilsack's spokesman, Ron Parker, declined to comment. The Democratic governor's negotiating team will present the state's counterproposal on Nov. 20. Negotiations typically take several months.

Two years ago, AFSCME proposed back-to-back raises of 7 percent across the board but settled for 3 percent annual increases. The collective bargaining agreement also added a step to the pay scale toward the end of the contract period, giving some employees an extra 4 percent wage

boost.

During the governor's race this year, Republican candidate Doug Gross complained that Vilsack had approved a labor contract that the state couldn't afford. Vilsack rejected Gross' call for a pay freeze.

Corderman noted Wednesday that workers had agreed to a four-month delay of the 3 percent raise that was to have taken effect in July. The salary savings topped \$11 million.

Employees also have paid a price by being required to take time off without pay, Corderman said. During the last budget year ending June 30, more than 70,000 hours of work were lost because of unpaid furloughs affecting more than 3,700 workers.

Corderman warned that scheduled furloughs of prison employees will threaten public safety. "It's a dangerous situation — and a pay cut for our members and their families," she said.

Since July 1, 2001, the equivalent of more than 1,900 full-time state jobs has been eliminated through retirements and layoffs as officials struggled to balance the

## New director

Iowa's equivalent of the Internal Revenue Service will have a new administrator.

**APPOINTMENT:** Gov. Tom Vilsack announced Wednesday that Don Cooper of Adel will serve as interim director of the Department of Revenue and Finance. Cooper succeeds Gerald Bair, who is retiring after 37 years at the department.

**BACKGROUND:** Cooper, a Drake University graduate, currently serves as administrator of the revenue department's tax compliance division. He has been with the state agency for 30 years.

**VILSACK:** "He is an experienced CPA with a solid background in audits and strategic planning," Vilsack said.

## Drunken driving targeted

County prosecutors say it's time for the Legislature to strengthen Iowa's drunken driving laws. The Iowa County Attorneys Association announced Wednesday that in 2003 it will push to change the state's standard for drunken driving from a blood-alcohol limit of .10 to .08.

**IMPASSE:** The Iowa Senate approved the change earlier this year but House leaders walked away from the proposal at the end of the 2002 session.

**SAFETY:** Adopting the .08 limit is "a major component of our efforts to make communities safer," said Dubuque County Attorney Fred McCaw, the association's president. "Operating a motor vehicle while intoxicated . . . is a serious, preventable crime that needlessly kills and injures Iowans."

**AT STAKE:** An October 2000 federal law requires states to adopt a .08 blood-alcohol limit. Iowa will be eligible for \$2 million a year if it approves the lower limit. It risks losing \$47.2 million in federal road money between 2004 and 2007 if it does not.

\$4.5 billion state budget.

AFSCME's other proposals for the two-year contract period starting next July include curtailing the use of private contractors

and no longer forcing employees to work overtime.

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# Service for Dendel, art teacher, today

By DEANNA TRUMAN-COOK  
REGISTER STAFF WRITER

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