

STATE OF WASHINGTON

BEFORE THE PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS COMMISSION

In the matter of the petition of: )  
 )  
WASHINGTON FEDERATION OF STATE )  
EMPLOYEES ) CASE 17723-C-03-1104  
 )  
For clarification of an existing ) DECISION 8267 - PSRA  
bargaining unit of employees of: )  
 )  
STATE - DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND ) ORDER CLARIFYING  
HEALTH SERVICES ) BARGAINING UNIT  
 )  
 )  
\_\_\_\_\_ )

*Gladys Burbank*, Director of Activities, for the union.

*Rose Mattison*, Labor Relations Manager, for the employer.

On July 31, 2003, the Washington Federation of State Employees (union) filed a petition for clarification of an existing bargaining unit with the Public Employment Relations Commission under WAC 391-35-026, concerning certain employees of the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (employer). The union sought to perfect the existing bargaining unit by accretion of about 97 employees in the employer's information systems services division. An investigation conference was conducted on September 18, 2003, by Hearing Officer Starr H. Knutson.

The Executive Director accepts the information and stipulations presented by the parties during the investigation conference and, acting under WAC 391-35-026(2), modifies the historical bargaining unit to include the employees in the information systems and services division in the bargaining unit historically represented by the union.

BACKGROUND

The employer is a state agency which provides a variety of social and health services to the residents of Washington, including the functions of public assistance. The union represents several bargaining units of employees of this employer, one of which includes employees who provide various economic and social services known collectively as "public assistance" functions. That unit was created in 1971,<sup>1</sup> and was last clarified by the Washington Personnel Resources Board on January 18, 2001.

The Personnel System Reform Act of 2002 (PSRA) was passed by the legislature and signed into law in 2002, with various effective dates. A new collective bargaining system for state civil service employees is codified in Chapter 41.80 RCW, of which one section that took effect on June 13, 2002, is pertinent here:

## RCW 41.80.070 BARGAINING UNITS - CERTIFICATION.

(1) A bargaining unit of employees covered by this chapter existing on June 13, 2002, shall be considered an appropriate unit, unless the unit does not meet all the requirements of (a) and (b) of this subsection. The commission, after hearing upon reasonable notice to all interested parties, shall decide, in each application for certification as an exclusive bargaining representative, the unit appropriate for certification. In determining the new units or modification of existing units, the commission shall consider: the duties, skills and working conditions of the employees; the history of collective bargaining; the extent of organization among the employees; the desires of the employees; and the avoidance of excessive fragmentation. . . .

The Commission adopted a rule to implement that statutory provision during the transition period which will exist until the duty to

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Personnel case RE-4.

bargain under the new system goes into effect on July 1, 2004, as follows:

WAC 391-35-026 SPECIAL PROVISION--STATE CIVIL SERVICE EMPLOYEES. In addition to the circumstances described in WAC 391-35-020, bargaining units of state civil service employees may be modified under this section until RCW 41.80.050 and 41.80.080 take effect on July 1, 2004.

. . .  
(2) *Bargaining units of state civil service employees in existence on June 13, 2002, shall be subject to being "perfected" under this section.*

(a) A petition to have an existing bargaining unit perfected may be filed by the exclusive bargaining representative, or by the employer and exclusive bargaining representative jointly.

(b) *All of the unit determination criteria set forth in RCW 41.80.070 shall be applicable to proceedings under this section. The history of bargaining in a unit configuration that is fragmentary and/or was based on narrower considerations shall not preclude creation of a "perfected" bargaining unit as to which a community of interests is demonstrated with regard to:*

(i) *The duties, skills and working conditions of all positions or classifications to be included in the "perfected" bargaining unit; and*

(ii) *The extent of organization and avoidance of unnecessary fragmentation shall be implemented to avoid stranding of other positions or classifications in units so small as to prejudice their statutory bargaining rights; and*

(iii) *The required separation of supervisors and nonsupervisory employees is implemented based on the delegations of authority then in existence; and*

(iv) *Two or more existing bargaining units can be merged through the procedure set forth in this section; and*

(v) *The exclusive bargaining representative demonstrates that it has majority support among any employees to be accreted to the bargaining unit(s) being "perfected."*

(emphasis added). By the stipulation now before the Executive Director, the parties seek to have the bargaining unit of non-

supervisory public assistance employees "perfected" under WAC 391-35-026(2).

### DISCUSSION

The determination and modification of appropriate bargaining units of state civil service employees is now a function delegated by the legislature to the Public Employment Relations Commission. RCW 41.06.340; 41.80.070.

The parties have submitted information and stipulations which satisfy the requirements of WAC 391-35-026(2), and nothing has come to the attention of the Commission staff or Executive Director that contradicts the propriety of the action requested by the parties. In this case, the accretion of about 97 employees to a bargaining unit encompassing more than 8000 employees addresses the "fragmentation" component of the statutory unit determination criteria, and the union has demonstrated majority support among the affected employees.

### FINDINGS OF FACT

1. The Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) is a general government agency of the state of Washington within the meaning of RCW 41.80.005(1).
2. The Washington Federation of State Employees, an employee organization within the meaning of RCW 41.80.005(7), is the exclusive bargaining representative of non-supervisory DSHS employees performing the functions of public assistance.

3. The parties have stipulated that the employees in the information systems services division have duties, skills and working conditions similar to, and a community of interest with, employees in the non-supervisory bargaining unit described in paragraph 2 of these findings of fact, and the union has demonstrated that it has majority support among the petitioned-for employees, in accordance with WAC 391-25-026(2)(b)(v).
4. No other facts have been discovered or brought to the attention of the Executive Director which call into question the propriety of the proposed accretion or the demonstration of support described in these findings of fact.

#### CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. The Public Employment Relations Commission has jurisdiction in this matter under Chapter 41.80 RCW and WAC 391-35-026.
2. The accretion of the employees described in paragraph 3 of the foregoing findings of fact will perfect the bargaining unit of non-supervisory public assistance employees as an appropriate unit for the purposes of collective bargaining under RCW 41.80.070.

#### ORDER

1. The bargaining unit of non-supervisory DSHS employees engaged in public assistance functions is modified to read:

All non-supervisory civil service employees of the Department of Social and Health Services in the following divisions/units: (1) DSHS Office of Appeals; (2) Economic Services Administration; (3)

Aging and Adult Services Administration; (4) Children's Administration; (5) Medical Assistance Administration; (6) Division of Fraud Investigations; and (7) Financial Services Administration, (8) Alcohol and Substance Abuse Division, (9) Information Systems Services Division, excluding confidential employees, internal auditors, supervisors, non-supervisory Washington Management Service employees (on and after July 1, 2004), and employees included in any other bargaining unit.

2. The employees in the information systems services division are included in that bargaining unit.

ISSUED at Olympia, Washington, on this 31<sup>st</sup> day of October, 2003.

PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS COMMISSION



MARVIN L. SCHURKE, Executive Director

This order will be the final order of the agency on the issue addressed unless a notice of appeal is filed with the Commission under WAC 391-35-210.