

Peter W.
BARCA



Minority Leader – Wisconsin State Assembly

July 3, 2014

Gregory L. Gracz, Director
Office of State Employment Relations
101 E. Wilson St., 4th Floor
Madison, WI 53707

Dear Director Gracz,

I am deeply disturbed by the recent media report by the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel unveiling advanced conversations happening within the Walker Administration about making significant changes to Wisconsin's civil service system.

I first want to ask whether you have been informed of these potential changes, since the media report suggests you were left in the dark during these discussions. I find it very concerning that in your role as the Director of the Office of State Employment Relations you would not be informed of these ongoing discussions so you could involve stakeholders to gather their input. These changes certainly could have implications beyond the ideas reported.

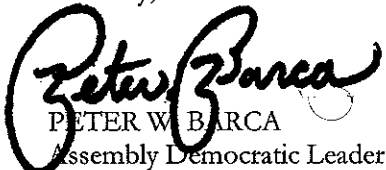
I strongly believe that any changes to the civil service system must be done in the most transparent and fair way possible, to honor the best interests of state employees and taxpayers. As you know, in my role on the Joint Committee on Employment Relations (JCOER) we have continuously expressed a keen interest in soliciting public input on any changes to the civil service employment practices. Involving an open discussion on proposed changes is the best way to preserve our history of clean, open and transparent government, as well as to ensure positive morale for our employees and collect the best ideas for operating our agencies.

Equally important, I continue to be concerned about the erosion of public and employee input in this important function of state government. That is why I am calling on OSER to solicit the input of public employees and the general public regarding any proposed changes that are considered to the civil service system.

Furthermore, I am distressed that these discussions were held out of the public view, and only discovered through investigative reporters' open record requests. As you well know, trust levels have been low as public employees have been surprised with monumental changes to collective bargaining and converting large numbers of public servants to political appointees without even the courtesy of notifying them, much less gathering their input. The public has a deep and compelling interest in our civil service system and has a right to know and weigh in on any potential changes.

Before going any further in recommending changes to our civil service system – a system that has been serving Wisconsin well for more than a century – we must inform the public and have a full and open discussion.

Sincerely,


PETER W. BARCA
Assembly Democratic Leader
64th Assembly District

