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August 1, 2013

**Subject: SEA MEMBERSHIP IS IMPORTANT**

Dear Colleague:

In the face of continuing political attacks, public employee unions including your State Engineering Association are more relevant and important than ever. It's easy to be part of a union when times are good; it's hard when times are tough. But it is in the tough times that membership is most important -- not just for individual employees but for the greater cause of good government and a fair, well-functioning workplace.

SEA emerged half a century ago during earlier tough times. Individual state employees in the engineering and technical professions recognized they needed a collective voice to address their concerns about fair compensation, due process and workplace rules that kept them from doing their best work. The benefits didn't come suddenly or all at once, but the hard work of those pioneering members of the State Engineering Association have benefited all of us over the years.

Now it's our time to reinvigorate the spirit of SEA's rank-and-file founders and again advance their causes.

**That's why I'm writing on behalf of the Board of Directors to announce our Associations' third annual membership drive.** We have been obliged to conduct these drives ever since the state legislature and governor made it much harder for us to collect dues. That was one of many chaotic hurdles created by Act 10, the 2011 state law that imposed significant barriers to collective bargaining on behalf of public employees.

**Last year you and many of your fellow state employees in the engineering and technical professions gave SEA another vote of confidence by renewing your membership, despite continuing political efforts to divide employees, dismantle collective bargaining and destroy public employee unions as a force for good government and a fair workplace.** As your elected officers, we on SEA's statewide board were gratified by your response. We recognize that your decision was made difficult by state government's decision to significantly reduce wages and benefits of most public employees in Wisconsin.

Some might be encouraged by the state's recently announced plans to finally loosen its purse and unilaterally declare small pay increases after years of compensation cuts. But, while welcome, a one-percent pay increase does not make up for recent years when nearly ten times that amount was taken from salary and benefits. It amounts to crumbs left on the table after special interests feasted some more on state tax dollars. Likewise, the state's new "discretionary" merit compensation awards – some might call them "discriminatory" – go to a very few employees and often do not affect base pay going forward. More crumbs.

Meanwhile, the state has moved very rapidly to what is basically a two-tier pay structure. New hires, who are hard to find since market compensation exceeds our pay classifications, are often awarded higher starting wages as a lure. These HAM ("hired above minimum") payments sometimes mean brand new hires earn more than veterans in the same positions. That is not only unfair; it cuts into morale.

No wonder state government continues to lose talented professionals, who increasingly see that their private-sector counterparts earn more. While leaving for greener pastures is understandable, we also know that efficient, high-quality public programs will suffer if the trend continues. That in turn means residents and taxpayers of Wisconsin will continue to see declines in our overall quality of life.

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If you find all this troubling, as we do, then your next step is clear. **All through August and September, SEA officers in each of our sections across the state will begin contacting you and handing out membership renewal materials and sign-up forms. Please renew with a one-time annual payment or automatic biweekly deductions from your designated personal account. Dues are SEA's only significant revenue and membership is the only way to keep SEA working on behalf of employee issues and the cause of effective, efficient government.**

SEA has worked hard to keep our programs intact while reducing costs and offering a bargain membership rate. SEA dues are well below typical dues collected by other public employee organizations and private-sector labor unions. The state's unfairly applied and unnecessary compensation claw-backs hurt everyone's pocketbook, but saving \$200 a year in dues by dropping your membership mainly serves to reward those who don't think you should have a collective voice.

Union bargaining rights may have been gutted, but membership bargaining units still legally exist and so do workplace issues previously covered through collective bargaining remain. This is much the state of affairs that existed when SEA was first organizing itself as an influential force. Now it's time to revitalize our professional association, so better times return.

**Over the past 12 months, SEA has continued to engage these issues informally and in the court of public opinion. We played watchdog as the administration continued to eye our public pension fund; we worked to ensure the hiring of nearly 200 new state engineers. We fought continued efforts to gut the state law that mandates agency cost-benefit analysis before outsourcing public works to pricey consulting firms. We continue to evaluate and provide valuable services to individual members with meritorious grievance cases.**

From our perspective these issues are not partisan; they are issues that at their core involve decent wages, fair working conditions and effective use of state tax dollars. **And the best way to have a say on these issues is through SEA, your professional organization.**

Arrange your dues payment within 60 days of gaining eligibility or (if you're a renewing member) before September and you will be eligible for the full array of SEA services. If you do not join within those times, a waiting period of 60 days following the beginning of your membership will apply before you are eligible.

Attached is further information including a Membership Authorization Card. Please complete all the information requested, sign it and return it to your section president with payment of your dues.

None of us can do this work by ourselves. It takes all of us, joining together, to help create a better future. Please stay in the fold so we can work collectively for a better future.

For the Board of Directors,



Larry Legro  
President

Enclosures;