

JAUCH CRITICIZES REPUBLICAN REJECTION OF STATE EMPLOYEE CONTRACTS

Friday, February 14, 2003

State Senator Bob Jauch (D-Poplar) today sharply criticized Republican rejection of State Employee contracts as an egregious insult to the citizens who work for Wisconsin to make Wisconsin work.

The Republican leaders are depriving these employees of wages that they have already earned and using them as scapegoats for a fiscal problem the employees did not create, Jauch said. State employees have been showing up for work for two years despite the lack of a contract and now they are told that their work did not mean anything.

The northern lawmaker stated that he was particularly offended that Republican lawmakers would use the current budget deficit as a shield when most of them voted for a budget two years ago that included sufficient dollars to pay for the new contracts. It is one thing for the Republicans to act like Ebenezer Scrooge in future contracts but quite something different when they act as if they are suffering from amnesia regarding their own past commitment.

The McCallum Administration reached a settlement with the state employee unions believing the Legislature would honor the negotiated settlement based upon the dollars the Legislature authorized, he said. After months of good faith negotiations the employee unions ratified contracts believing they could trust the Legislature.

Jauch said that state employees had a right to be frustrated, betrayed and furious about Legislative attitude that treats the employees as worthless second class citizens and a behavior that demeans and degrades thousands of citizens who serve the citizens of our State.

In the past year, state employees have lost their jobs and those remaining have been asked to shoulder extra responsibilities to continue to provide services to our citizens. They have done so in a professional way, Jauch said. Now some lawmakers are asking them to sacrifice even more. In the last two years, they honored their contract with the State. It is a shame that some lawmakers are not willing to honor ours.

Jauch stated that lawmakers had a chance to address this issue last summer during legislative debate on the budget repair bill but decided to put together a piece meal package to get them through the elections. It is patently unfair to try to revisit the past and punish our state employees when the Legislature was so unwilling and lackadaisical in its own responsibility to address tax and spending decisions.

The Republican lawmakers decision to reject the contracts puts the State on a collision course with our own employees. It is an irresponsible action that needlessly puts us in confrontation with those who serve us. These citizens didn't create the problem, all of us in the Legislature did. Our citizens will be better off if these lawmakers would own up to the reality of their own careless decisions instead of punishing the state employees, he concluded.