

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sick time benefit not unethical perk

Like so much public discourse today (energy, environment, taxation, terrorism ...), recent discussions on unused sick time reveal fuzzy thinking – as does The Northwestern’s Jan. 2 editorial.

Unused sick time, which is convertible to health insurance premium payments, is not some kind of unethical under-the-table perk. Just like unconvertible sick time, it’s an example of the many different fringe benefits in employer-employee remuneration packages. Other examples are the firefighter’s, law enforcement’s, and university administrator’s 25 percent higher retirement than other employees in their system; employer’s contribution to 401k plans; the retirement benefits of the armed forces and their commissaries offering goods below market value; congressional retirement and health benefits, just to name a few. (And does our President reimburse taxpayers for vacation flights to Crawford, Texas?)

Usually, splitting off part of an employee’s pay into such benefits reduces their dollar value by restricting their purchasing options – just like gift cards do. Even so, if one wants to argue that a particular employee’s total pay package is inappropriate, we need to see that rational.

But if one wants to make an argument that any of these divisions of total pay is wrong, we

need to see that beef. But so far, implications lack justification that one pay package is somehow more ethical or less abusive than another. Moreover, such claims smell of an underlying desire to control employer-employee contracts by some vague notion of fairness or political correctness.

John Karl
Oshkosh

UW-Fox Valley needs communication center

I own a business in Oshkosh, but in my previous profession I was part of a large telecommunications company. I learned about communication and the vital role it plays in all aspects of life. I believe that the building of a Communications Arts Center at UW-Fox Valley addresses the teaching of communication skills that business owners value when looking for qualified employees.

Communications are considered “soft skills” but they are some of the most important for employees of both large and small businesses. We can train people in many of the hands on activities that our businesses require, but teaching skills in communication arts like public presentations, teamwork and writing are best done by our colleges and universities.

The Communication Arts Center project at UW-Fox Valley which is now being considered by the Winnebago County Board will provide an educational venue for our area col-

lege students who need to be adequately prepared to meet the current and future needs of our business community. I am therefore asking the Board members to support this funding request.

I know that Outagamie County has already approved their portion and the campus Foundation is helping out financially, too. Please support this project.

Kate Dugan
Oshkosh

Booster seat law fails common sense test

Law enforcement agencies in Wisconsin have announced that they will now vigorously enforce the new law requiring children four to eight years old to ride in booster car seats.

So if you place your seven-year-old in the back seat of your 4,000-pound SUV equipped with side air bags and securely strap him in place with a seat belt and shoulder restraint, you may be fined \$135 for not using the required booster seat.

That same seven-year-old, however, can board a state approved school bus and ride without either a booster seat, or a seat belt and with no side air bags – the state considers this scenario both legal and safe!

In the immortal words of Walt Kelley’s comic strip character Pogo: “We have met the enemy, and they is us!”

Jim Raymond
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Oshkosh
Northwestern
Jan 5,
2007
Pg A-4

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