

Letter to the Editor of the Democrat Herald

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Union pay setup explained

You ask, "If state employees want to hold paid jobs in their union, let the union pay them directly. Why go through this reimbursement scheme?" in your editorial (Sept. 14), "A union flap ensnares state."

This arrangement mainly applies to the president of our union. Other employees take short term leaves of absence under similar arrangements to serve the union, usually only a month or two. But a president's leave can last up to four years - the main purpose has been to protect a return to their job so serving the union doesn't result in extraordinary financial loss - an idea much like our citizen legislature.

The agreement requires the union and its president to hold the employer harmless "against any and all claims, damages, suits or other forms of liability which may arise out of any action taken or not taken" by the employer, and promises all "overtime, comp time earned and travel expenses will be reimbursed by the Union."

All of the good intentions of this agreement have been clearly cast aside by one person. The specific issue is unauthorized overtime, since no one is "above" the president to authorize overtime. So if overtime is involved, only the president would decide if it's needed - clearly an unorthodox situation. You can bet this will be reviewed.

Gourley is a retiree member of SEIU Local 503.