

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL CONCERNS
MINUTES OF MEETING**

March 3, 2014

[In these minutes: Investments related to sustainability; the case for paid sick leave; earned sick and safe time proposed legislation.]

[These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate; none of the comments, conclusions or actions reported in these minutes represent the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate, the Administration or the Board of Regents.]

PRESENT: David Golden (chair), Jayne Blodgett, Laura Duckett, Carol Foth, Michael O’Day, Anthony Quill, Paul Ranelli, Naomi Scheman, Teresa Schicker, Catherine Solheim, Eric Svingen, Abeer Syedah

GUESTS: Pat McGovern, Patrick Ness, Jon Steadland

REGRETS: Mallory Carter, David Fuhs, Zan Gao, Stephen Gross, Katie Jacobson, Brenda Kayzar, Amelious Whyte

ABSENT: Benjamin Beutel, Natalie Pope, Jennifer Snider

WELCOME

Mr. Golden welcomed members, called the meeting to order, and asked for introductions.

UNIVERSITY INVESTMENTS RELATED TO SUSTAINABILITY

Jon Steadland, associate to the deputy chief of staff, Office of the President, spoke to the committee in response to the February discussion of divestment in fossil fuel resources related to the Endowment Fund. The committee sought to better understand the very complex nature of the University’s investment practices.

Mr. Steadland explained that the Fossil Free Minnesota student organization had requested that the University divest in oil companies, but that is an extremely costly undertaking and one not supported by the University. However, to address this issue that has also been expressed by the broader University community, investments related to sustainability and renewable energy are being encouraged. This is reflected in the proposed changes to the Board of Regent’s Endowment Fund Policy. Mr. Steadland distributed a copy of the draft policy containing the proposed changes related to sustainability and renewable energy. He then directed their attention to the following excerpts:

- Section V. Reporting
 - (b) an annual report containing the following information:
 - (3) an evaluation of investments related to sustainability and renewable energy.
- Mr. Steadland added that this is a positive step and was largely the result of the requests

made by the Fossil Free Minnesota student organization.

Members then discussed the following points:

- What is exactly meant by “sustainability”?
 - This term is broad from the policy perspective and an example would be an investment in the technology that enables a hospital to go paperless. For the reporting mechanism “sustainability” would have to be more clearly defined if the policy changes are passed.
- Why are there objections to divestment?
 - Divestment would not have much of a financial bearing on the company because the shares will still be sold to someone else. However, it is understood that divestment would make a clear social statement.
 - The University’s position is that our work in other areas of sustainability and renewable energy, specifically those initiatives that lessen demand on fossil fuel resources, is a more effective way of demonstrating our commitment in this area.
 - Mr. Quill observed that divestment would be very costly to the University because the shares would be sold for a drastically lower price than what they were purchased for. The University does not invest directly; they go through a qualified manager.
 - Mr. Steadland directed the committee’s attention to the first Investment Objective within the policy, which is “preserve the inflation adjusted value of the endowment.”
 - Mr. Quill added that the University of Michigan has chosen not to divest and he will provide the committee with more information regarding their stance.
- Members made the following comments regarding the wording of the policy:
 - The reporting is worded to look at the positive investments, is there a way that the negative can be reported?
 - Including “climate impact” would more accurately portray the requests made by the student organization and is a clear statement as opposed to “sustainability.”

THE PUBLIC HEALTH CASE FOR SICK LEAVE POLICIES

Dr. Pat McGovern, Bond Professor of Environmental and Occupational Health Policy, Deputy Director of the Midwest Center for Occupational Health and Safety, presented research on the benefits of paid leave. She used a PowerPoint to highlight the following points:

- Approximately 40% of private sector workers in the US lack paid sick leave. The disparity is most pronounced among those in low wage jobs.
- Lack of paid sick leave has important adverse consequences for public health---esp. related to infectious disease
- The implications are that people without sick leave are forced to make a choice every time they are ill; stay at home to recover or go to work b/c they can’t afford to lose wages. Given the choice, many will opt to go to work while sick. They compromise their health (can’t reset and recover), possibly their safety/productivity (fatigue and lack of attention leads to injuries and mistakes) and the health/ safety of others (infectious disease, potential impact of mistakes if one is in a safety sensitive position—operating machinery).
- Impact of Sick Leave Policies on Health Services Use and Cost

- Access to paid sick leave was significantly associated with increased use of outpatient care and reduced use of emergency room in a nationally representative sample of US working adults with health insurance coverage (Cook, 2011).
- Paid sick leave is associated with an increased use of preventive care services such as cancer screening (e.g., mammography, Pap test, endoscopy) at recommended time periods in US workers (Peipins et al, 2012).
- Employers use of paid sick leave may reduce work-related injuries (Asfaw et al, 2012).
- Opposition
 - Business opposition—cost of paid sick days to business owners.
 - Businesses will be discouraged from locating within certain city or state boundaries (National Small Business Association).
- Some businesses have voiced support
 - Minimum standard for earning sick days levels the playing field for employers who already provide this benefit.
 - Paid leave can improve employee retention, which reduces employers hiring and training costs.
 - “Better Workplaces, Better Businesses” website to collect resources and a national listing of businesses and organizations voicing support for paid leave policies.
- Recommendations by APHA
 - San Francisco’s 2006 paid sick leave law:
 - Requires all employers to offer paid sick leave, which workers can use to care for themselves or a family member.
 - After a 90-day probationary period employees accrue 1 day of paid leave for each 30 hours worked.
 - Employers with less than 10 employees must provide at least 40 hours per year; those with 10 or more employees must provide 72.

EARNED SICK AND SAFE TIME

Patrick Ness, Public Policy Director, Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, presented the members with proposed legislation for Earned Sick and Safe Time (ESST). The bill will be presented to 6-7 House committees in the next few months. He distributed a handout titled ESST Basic Fact Sheet and discussed the following points:

Earned Sick and Safe Time legislation would:

- Allow workers **to earn up to nine job-protected earned sick days each year** to be used to recover from their own illnesses, access preventive care or provide care to a sick family member. Workers in businesses with 20 or fewer workers would earn up to five sick days each year.
- Allow workers who are **survivors of domestic violence, stalking or sexual assault** to use their earned sick time to recover or seek assistance related to an incident.
- Include a simple method for calculating accrued sick time. Workers would earn a minimum of one hour of paid sick time for every 30 hours worked.
- Allow employers to require certification if an employee uses more than three paid sick

days in a row. For survivors of domestic violence, the certification may be from a law enforcement officer or victim advocate.

- Allow employers to use their existing policies, as long as they meet the minimums set forth in the Act for time, types of use and method of use.
- Providing **earned sick time** is cost effective. Working people with earned sick time are more productive and less likely to leave their jobs, which saves businesses money by reducing turnover. And “presenteeism” – when employees work sick – is estimated to cost our national economy \$160 billion in lost productivity each year.· Providing **earned sick time** is cost effective. Working people with earned sick time are more productive and less likely to leave their jobs, which saves businesses money by reducing turnover. And “presenteeism” – when employees work sick – is estimated to cost our national economy \$160 billion in lost productivity each year.[i]

[i] Stewart, W., Ricci, J.A., Chee, E., et al. (2003, December). Lost Productive Health Time Costs from Health Conditions in the United States: Results from the American Productivity Audit. *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 45(12), 1234-1246. Retrieved 13 June 2012, from http://www.workhealth.org/whatsnew/whnewrap/Stewart%20etal_lost%20productive%20work%20time%20costs%20from%20health%20conditions%20in%20the%20US_%20Results%20from%20the%20American%20Productivity%20Audit%202003.pdf

Members discussed the issues related to the proposed legislation:

- Mr. Ness explained that the cost and the tradeoffs have not yet been fully assessed. It is not yet known how much is saved by reduced hospitalization as a result of reduced infections and routine preventative care.
- Mr. Ness said that the AARP has endorsed and is actively leading on this legislation, along with the Women's Consortium and other nonprofits.
- Members discussed how this could affect student employees. FMLA and OSHA regulations do not cover student employees and Mr. Golden said that this issue should be revisited at the next meeting.
- Professor Scheman said that it should be examined how this can be done at the University before the legislation forces it to be done.
- UPDATE: As of March 19, 2014, the bill has passed three committees in the legislature.

Hearing no further business, Mr. Golden adjourned the meeting.

Jeannine Rich

University Senate Office