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Assemblymember Dickinson Introduces Public Employee's Bill of Rights

Sacramento – Today, Assemblymember Roger Dickinson (D-Sacramento) introduced Assembly Bill 1655. The bill would enact the Public Employee's Bill of Rights Act to provide various rights and protections to non-excluded state civil service employees. The bill will be heard by the legislature in the coming months.

"Statutorily defining an employee's rights will help ensure that essential working conditions are met, enhance and clarify the expectations of employees and management alike, and improve the working relationship between rank and file workers and state managers. In turn, these changes will result in improved worker productivity and more harmonious personnel relations," said Assemblymember Dickinson.

Currently, state employee rights and working conditions may be bargained for and included within a memorandum of understanding (MOU). Unfortunately, not all bargained-for working conditions are uniformly enforced or understood across all departments and agencies, which can negatively impact employee morale and undermine expectations of public employees. As a result, employer–employee relations can be unsettled and unstable.

AB 1655 is modeled after the existing Peace Officer Procedural Bill of Rights, the Firefighter's Bill of Rights, and the Bill of Rights for "excluded" state employees (supervisory, managerial, and confidential) which provide a series of rights and procedural protections to other classes of public employees. As such, AB 1655 similarly creates a minimum level of procedural due process for "non-excluded" state employees.

"It is about time that rank and file employees are given the same rights and protections as peace officers, firefighters and state managers and supervisors," said Dickinson.

The bill would require that any adverse action taken against a state employee be initiated within a year of the cause for discipline in order to prevent the abuse of the investigatory process, which some agencies delay for years in order to prevent the employee from defending him or herself.

Additionally, the bill would ensure that employees have priority over contractors in filling positions, creating a sense of stability and resulting in more dedicated service to the state.

It also would reduce an excessive amount of state contracting out activities, which has burdened the state with millions of dollars in unnecessary costs.

“One of the goals for the Public Employee’s Bill of Rights is to mirror the government’s guarantee for a swift trial to its citizens. Another important goal of the bill is to reduce contracting out and achieve the most efficient business model for our cash-strapped state,” said Dr. Stuart Bussey, MD, JD, President of the Union of American Physicians and Dentists.

AB 1655 is co-sponsored by SEIU Local 1000 and Union of American Physicians and Dentists.

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