



Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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May, 2019

Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #435

Additional Position Authority (Historical Society)

CURRENT LAW

The Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS) is responsible for collecting and disseminating information about the history of Wisconsin and the surrounding region. Its activities include collecting and preserving the state's archival records, operating 12 historic sites around the state, documenting and assisting in the preservation of historic properties, and publishing historical texts, including textbooks and curriculum support materials for school-aged children and teachers.

GOVERNOR

No provision.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. In its agency budget request, the Society requested an increase of 46.5 classified permanent positions (15.5 GPR, 2.0 FED, 8.5 PR, and 20.5 SEG) to replace 110 limited-term employment (LTE) appointments currently used to perform permanent work functions. The Society indicated that salaries and fringe benefits for these positions could be funded within the Society's current funding level, and no additional funding authority was requested for these additional positions.
2. In its request document, the Society indicated that LTEs are currently filling roles that are long-term and essential to the agency's function. Position titles that would be created under the proposal include historic site coordinators at five state historic sites; two archaeologists; seven education specialists at five historic sites and in the Society's programs and outreach division; and several financial services and informational technology specialists. The Society also employs a significant number of seasonal and project LTEs, but these positions are not included in the proposal.
3. LTE positions are intended to be temporary, and are limited to 1,039 hours of work in a

twelve-month period. (Full-time employment is considered to be 2,080 hours of work per year.) An individual can hold more than one LTE appointment concurrently, or may hold successive LTE appointments, as long as the appointments are for two or more different positions. LTE employees are paid on an hourly basis, and typically do not qualify for vacation, paid holidays, or sick leave. LTE employees may qualify for participation in the Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS) if they meet certain criteria (generally, for an individual hired after July 1, 2011, the individual must be employed at least two-thirds of what is considered full-time employment, or 1,200 hours in one year, and must be expected to be employed for at least one year from their date of hire). State employees who are covered by the WRS are also eligible for health insurance and other insurance programs, although the employee may be required to be employed for a period of time before qualifying for employer contributions.

4. Society position counts have decreased significantly since 1999-01, from 173.90 to 135.04 (a decrease of 22.3%). Although the number of GPR positions increased slightly in the 2017-19 biennium following the transfer of Circus World Museum operations to WHS, overall GPR positions have decreased by 30.4% since 1999-01.

5. The Society did not request additional funding in their budget request, so providing the additional positions would not result in a fiscal impact in the 2019-21 biennium. (The Society would instead transfer \$1,350,100 in 2019-20 and \$1,800,300 in 2020-21 from LTE/miscellaneous salaries to permanent position salaries.) However, there could be an additional cost in future years if additional employees become eligible for fringe benefits or general wage adjustments that they would not otherwise receive. Generally, agencies receive standard budget adjustments that include an adjustment to fringe benefit rates, and may include general wage adjustments provided to state employees.

6. In the past, some have expressed concern regarding state position counts, and a desire to limit the total number of state employees. On the other hand, the Society has indicated that the current staffing model significantly impacts its ability to carry out its responsibilities. The high rate of turnover causes qualified individuals to leave the Society because they prefer more stable employment. The current model is inefficient from a human resources standpoint because positions must be filled more regularly than if they were permanent positions, which requires staff to recruit job applicants, conduct interviews and background checks, and complete training and other onboarding for new staff on a frequent basis. The LTE model also results in low morale among employees who perform ongoing essential work for the Society without receiving benefits or job security, which could result in reduced work productivity. WHS also expresses concern about risk management under the current model, because its lack of position authority results in fewer supervisor positions, insufficient training on safety and security matters, and inadequate staffing during periods of LTE turnover.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Provide an increase of 46.5 classified permanent positions (15.5 GPR, 2.0 FED, 8.5 PR, and 20.5 SEG) for the Historical Society beginning in 2020-21.

ALT 1	Change to Base		Change to Bill	
	Funding	Positions	Funding	Positions
GPR	\$0	15.50	\$0	15.50
FED	0	2.00	0	2.00
PR	0	8.50	0	8.50
SEG	<u>0</u>	<u>20.50</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>20.50</u>
Total	\$0	46.50	\$0	46.50

2. Take no action.

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