

# Agenda Item Report



**Winnebago County**  
*The Wave of the Future*

DATE: October 26, 2023  
FROM: Mark Habeck, Director of Human Resources  
RE: PTO Policy

## **General Description:**

A proposed change to how employee time off benefits are handled. Currently the County has a traditional system of separate categories of time off including vacation, floating holiday, sick time, and funeral leave. The current system is inconsistent in benefit offerings throughout the workforce. This proposal would implement a consistent Paid Time Off (PTO) system consolidating time off into two banks: PTO and an Extended Leave Bank (ELB).

## **Action Requested:**

Approval of a resolution implementing the PTO system including multiple affected policies within the Human Resources Policy Manual and a separate Transition Document establishing special rules to facilitate changing systems.

## **Procedural Steps:**

(Show each level of committee and board approval needed, with meeting dates.)

Committee of Jurisdiction: P&F	Meeting date: 11/03/2023
Action taken: _____	Vote: _____
Other Committee: _____	Meeting date: _____
Action taken: _____	Vote: _____
County Board	Meeting date: 11/21/2023

## **Background:**

Compensation studies were conducted in 2016 and 2023 and each time recommendations had been made to either increase time off benefits under the current system or change completely and move to a PTO system. The current system was determined to be under market in relation to sick time and a bit behind the market in vacation. To streamline a variety of differences between departments and positions related to time off benefits, a new PTO system is being proposed. This system will position Winnebago County to offer competitive time off benefits that will enhance both recruitment and retention efforts.

After the study in 2016, a work group was formed that invested a significant amount of time and effort into reviewing time off benefits. No recommendations from that study regarding time off were implemented. After the most recent study was completed in 2023, several recommendations from the consultant were acted upon. This plan continues in trying to implement those recommendations.

Modifying the current system by adding additional sick leave and vacation time would still leave many identified issues unaddressed (such as a lack of uniform rules, inconsistencies between departments, and the administrative burden). However, PTO would provide a more comprehensive solution for all of

those issues and create a framework that could be adjusted in the future to stay current with the market. While there are still other benefits that will be considered in the future, this plan focuses on paid time off.

Part of the process in developing this proposal was gathering feedback from employees. After incorporating many of those suggestions and finalizing the proposal, we have received positive responses such as:

" I am hearing a lot of positive responses to the changes alongside a sense of being heard and valued."

"I think staff will see this as being heard and I appreciate that."

There was also an employee who spoke up at one of the meetings and described his experience at another employer. He said that this PTO plan was better than his previous employers.

As shared during the presentation to the County Board, 27% of Winnebago County's *entire* workforce is slotted to reach retirement age under WRS rules within the next 3 years. The ability to effectively recruit and retain talent will play a significant role in the ability to continue providing services to the community. Approving a change to PTO will provide a more competitive benefit and help in these areas.

#### **Policy Discussion:**

The proposed implementation of a PTO system would address the concerns identified above from both the 2016 and 2023 compensation studies. In addition, the proposed update:

- Eliminates many of the variations in time off benefits between departments and positions.
- Affords much greater flexibility to employees to use and bank time off based upon individual needs.
- Implements a bereavement system to replace funeral leave, which currently has strict definitions to qualify for usage.
- Provides a more competitive benefit to both attract new talent and retain current talent.
- Provides a system that is more easily administered and adjustable for future needs.
- Does not add any additional funding requests to the budget.

The proposed revisions seek to offer the greatest positive impact to the largest number of employees. PTO truly provides greater flexibility to face the individual challenges of our team members and establishes a consistent framework that can be modified to stay current with future needs.

#### **Attachments:**

The following attachments are included:

- Updated policies for the Human Resources Policy Manual (Policy 13 Family and Medical Leave, Policy 15 Unpaid Leave and Other Leaves of Absence, Policy 17 Paid Time Off (PTO), Policy 18 Holidays, Policy 20 Income Continuation Benefits, Policy 26 Layoffs, and Policy 27 Termination of Employment)
- A separate Transition Document listing rules specific to the transition year (which list exceptions to the updated policies to help in smoothing the impact of changing systems)
- Resolution to adopt proposed changes