

## Pension Reform



**E**mployee pensions underwent a major revamping late 2006 to update a system that has not experienced any considerable reform in over 30 years. On August 17, 2006, President George W. Bush signed into law the Pension Protection Act (H.R. 4) establishing new rules with far-reaching impact on most types of retirement savings plans, including traditional defined benefit pensions and popular defined-contribution retirement plans such as 401 (k).

Noteworthy changes in the legislation:

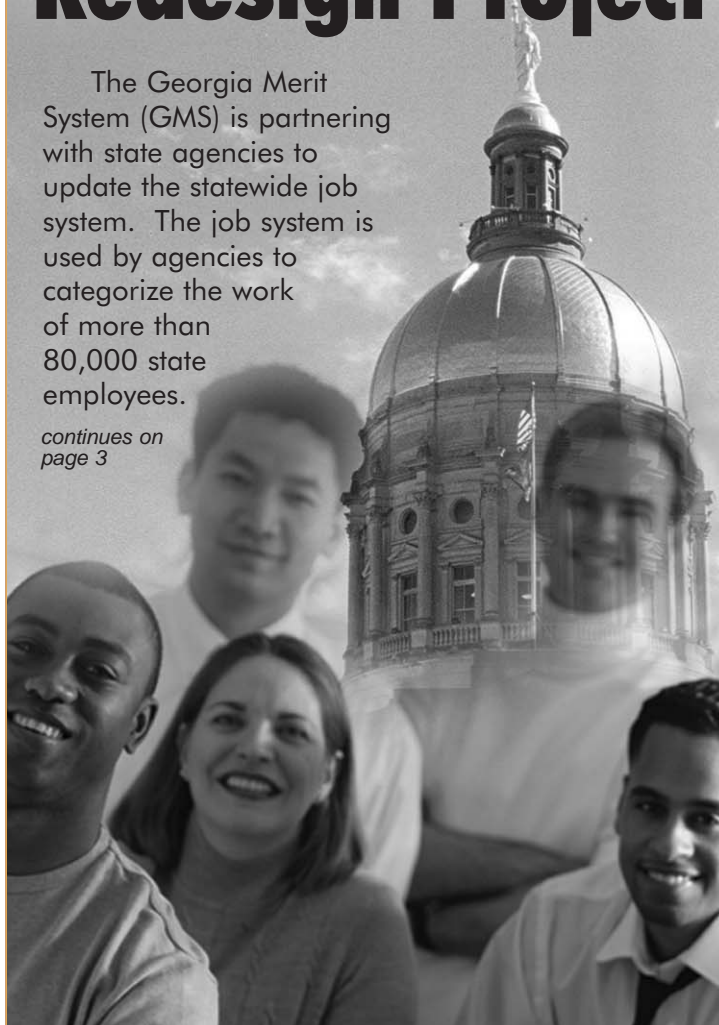
- Establishes standards to increase the current 90 percent funding requirement for defined-benefit plans up to 100 percent funding. Beginning in 2008, there will be

see **Pension Reform** page 4

## The Job Classification Redesign Project

The Georgia Merit System (GMS) is partnering with state agencies to update the statewide job system. The job system is used by agencies to categorize the work of more than 80,000 state employees.

*continues on page 3*



## Strategic HR Conference

October 10-12, 2007

Questions?  
Call 800-283-7476  
option #3  
or visit the Web site at  
[www.shrm.org/  
conferences](http://www.shrm.org/conferences)

### In This Issue

Viewpoint .....	2
The Job Classification Redesign Project .....	3
Workforce Trends ....	4
Recruitment .....	5
EEOC Targets Systemic Discrimination .....	5
Legal News .....	6
HR News Briefs ....	6-7
Integrating Work and Technology .....	7
Are you an effective leader? .....	7
Ask the Experts .....	8

## TeamWorks

Coming March 2007 to Team Georgia

The "TeamWorks" PeopleSoft Portal, a new feature accessible via the Team Georgia Connection, will provide employees access to state administrative services on-line, which includes enhanced self-service functionality.  
[www.team.georgia.gov](http://www.team.georgia.gov)

# Executive ViewPoint

## Focus on Ability and Opportunity



*“A job for every Georgian and a Georgian for every job.”*

Michael Thurmond  
Commissioner, Department of Labor

**A**t the Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL), it is ability, not disability, that counts. We focus on helping people with disabilities reach their potential through independence and employment. This focus is in keeping with our stated mission: "A job for every Georgian and a Georgian for every job."

The Georgia Department of Labor is committed to the principle that people with disabilities are assets, and our efforts emphasize eliminating attitudinal barriers, as well as physical ones. Our aim is to build a diverse, qualified and productive workforce that positively impacts both employers and job seekers. We begin by recognizing that people with disabilities make up a valuable, underutilized segment of Georgia's workforce.

GDOL's Rehabilitation Services is the starting point in leveling the playing field for persons with disabilities. Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is one program within Rehabilitation Services that offers people with disabilities who want to work a way to become self-sufficient, productive and contributing members of their communities.

Agencies, in turn, benefit because

they gain access to a major untapped source of well-qualified workers – who just happen to have a disability – who will be committed to their jobs and loyal to the employers who hire them. In fact, our agency helped over 4,000 qualified people with disabilities this past year find meaningful employment at competitive wages, resulting in hundreds of satisfied employers.

Hiring people with disabilities adds diversity to your workforce and gives it a competitive advantage in an increasingly competitive economy that can be critical to financial success. The chances are that many businesses may also benefit from tax credits, tax deductions and other incentives.

The GDOL offers a full range of services to employers and persons with disabilities through more than 100 locally based state-of-the-art career centers and vocational rehabilitation offices across the state. To achieve its mission, the department:

- Partners with educational institutions to plan effective school-to-work transitions for students with disabilities;
- Provides employers and job seekers, with personal, customized

and expert assistance aimed at matching the abilities of all job seekers with the needs of Georgia employers;

- Facilitates placement of workers with disabilities in productive employment;
- Analyzes existing jobs, focusing on their essential functions and critical demands, matching the right person with the right job;
- Provides expert assistive work technology guidance through rehabilitation engineers and technicians that addresses job modification and job accommodation concerns.

Members of our staff know, understand and support the dynamics of the local marketplace, and we're familiar with the support services available. That means all options are tailored to fit the employer's needs.

I encourage you to give us a try. It's a win-win proposition for everyone.

For additional information about services to persons with disabilities, contact Peggy Rosser, Assistant Commissioner for Rehabilitation Services at (404) 232-3910 or [Peggy.Rosser@dol.state.ga.us](mailto:Peggy.Rosser@dol.state.ga.us)

# The Job Classification Redesign Project

*continued from page 1*

The classification redesign project is part of the total revamping of the statewide job and pay systems.

Though labor market conditions and many aspects of the workplace have changed in the last ten years, the statewide systems of job descriptions and pay grades have not been updated since 1996. In the last ten years the job classification system has grown in size without keeping abreast of changing market conditions or industry standards for comparing work and pay. Working with agency human resources staff, and outside human resource consulting firms, the Merit System will draft a new job classification system that meets the needs of state agencies.

The job classification redesign project will consolidate the current more than 3500 jobs on the statewide classification plan into 500 jobs with descriptions that are written in an industry-standard format. The job titles and descriptions will be comparable to classification systems used by the U.S. Department of Labor, the Census Bureau, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and other government and private sector employers. The new format will facilitate market matching, the comparison of state demographics to the general state and regional labor force, and the use of standardized competencies, workforce planning and other workforce analytic processes. As part of the redesign, the current job descriptions are simplified, replacing the two to five page descriptions with one-page descriptions containing brief general work summaries and lists of characteristic responsibilities.

The 500 new jobs are classified first into 17 occupational groups, then into job series, and finally into job levels. The occupational groups are job families based upon work performed, skills, education, training,

and credentials, e.g., Engineering and Education. The job series further specifies the occupational group. For example, the financial group contains series for Accounting, Auditing, Examiners, Budget, and Payroll. Job series are then subdivided into trainee/entry, working, advanced, and supervisory levels. Additionally, management positions are categorized in three levels defined as unit, mid and general managers. Finally, executive positions will be in a

increments (CDIs) for several of the 500 jobs. State agencies and GMS staff will develop CDIs for the remaining jobs at a later date. Corporate Psychology Resources will work with agencies' HR staff and identified Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) from agencies and use individual interviews, group conference call interviews, focus group sessions, and email validation questionnaires to create entry qualifications, technical competencies,

The job classification redesign project will consolidate the current more than 3,500 jobs on the statewide classification plan into 500 jobs...

separate group that will include only agency heads and their senior management or first-line direct reports.

The first drafts of the proposed job descriptions have been completed. In September, GMS facilitated interagency sessions to validate the new job descriptions and the plan for mapping of current jobs to the new system. After the validation sessions, a second round of review of the full statewide classification system was made available to agency HR staff via a website that provided an opportunity for mapping changes and revision.

A secondary phase of the classification design project involves the development of job specific technical competencies, and possible career development increments to assist in the recruitment and retention of staff. Corporate Psychology Resources (CPR) has been contracted to develop entry qualifications, technical competencies, and requirements for career development

and – requirements that will be added to the new job descriptions.

Parallel to the above project activity, Mercer Human Resources Consulting Group is providing analysis of multiple mission-critical jobs and working with GMS to benchmark the pay of these jobs against similar jobs outside state government. The market rates for benchmark jobs will be used for developing a new pay structure and aligning it with market values. The goal is to align the State pay structure more closely to market pay, so that the State will have a more competitive and flexible compensation system. A key result of this alignment would enable the State to better address some of the root causes for recruitment and retention issues. The new job descriptions with entry qualifications, technical competencies and CDI requirements will help agencies have greater flexibility in aligning their workforce with strategic business goals.

# Pension Reform

continued from page 1

- a 4-year phase-in of the new 100 percent funding target.
- Encourages employees to save and contribute more to their own retirement through various tax incentives and tax provisions. The legislation makes permanent the saver's tax credit to encourage low-income workers to save for retirement.
- Establishes standards for pension funding, changing accounting rules for pension plans to include more stringent funding requirements from the Financial Accounting Standards Board.
- Increases contribution requirements defining how much companies must contribute to their plans and how much they must pay in premiums to the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corp, which insures pension plans.
- Provides new disclosure rules ensuring plan participants are informed about the funding of their plan in a statement that outlines a number of factors including total plan assets, credit balances and liabilities for the current and two preceding years. Defined-Benefit plans can provide a notice of statement availability in lieu of a statement.

## Salary Slippage

The average increase in median salaries for state-employed professionals last year was 2.5 percent, when the inflation rate was 3.4 percent.

Source: Seventh Annual AFT Public Employees Compensation Survey

## WORKFORCE TRENDS

# Employees still seek a work/life balance

Seeking a balance of work and home life is a primary consideration for the growing number of Xers and Nexters now in the labor force. Today, many companies offer a number of work/life benefits to attract and retain this segment of employees. Workforce trends indicate a flexible work schedule is one work/life benefit that seems to be growing in popularity across generations. In fact, a flexible or alternative work schedule has been cited as one of the most important benefits job applicants seek when searching for employment. A flexible work schedule allows employees to vary their work arrival and/or departure times. Some studies even suggest that a flexible work schedule, may be more of a factor in recruitment and retention than monetary compensation. This has proved especially true for working mothers and single parents.

In a recent survey by CareerBuilder.com, women with children who work outside of the home were willing to make less money to spend more time with their children. Of the women surveyed, 52 percent were willing to take a pay cut for more family time with nearly one in 10 willing to cut their compensation by 10 percent or more.

Yet, many workers feel they can jeopardize their employment status by taking advantage of work scheduling flexibility. Although the workplace recognizes the desire and need for work/life balance, businesses are still a long ways off of making this practice the norm. Some employees are choosing not to even take earned annual paid time off for fear of



getting behind in work or jeopardizing their jobs.

According to Families and Work Institute president, Ellen Galinsky, 40 of 79 percent of workers who want flexibility, feel it would negatively impact their employment.

And, while employees desire more schedule flexibility, technology and work demands consume more time of its employees, especially those in leadership positions. Blackberrys, palm pilots, laptops and cell phones are contributing to work at home, even during times when employees are scheduled to be off the job.

As business recruitment efforts change to compete for skilled personnel, benefit offerings will have to reflect a culture of flexible scheduling options and encouraged work/life balance.



Many state agencies can offer their employees some schedule flexibility through participation in the state's Work Away program. The Work Away program is a state initiative consisting of telework and flexible or alternative work schedules. Training and assistance in program components can be obtained by contacting Dorothy Gordon, Telework Coordinator, at 404-463-6723 or [workaway@gms.state.ga.us](mailto:workaway@gms.state.ga.us)

## On the Horizon with Recruitment and Selection



Agencies can now choose to use any of these vendors or they can, of course, select a vendor of their own choice.

Regardless of how the vendor's assessment tool is delivered, whether on paper, on a PC, or over the Internet, GMS can provide

The Governor's Customer Service Initiative has many goals, among them being the recruitment and selection of employees most capable of providing the superior level of service expected by Georgia's citizens. Research has shown that selection procedures developed using best practices increase the likelihood that agencies will hire people with the right blend of competencies needed to succeed in customer service jobs. Productive employees create customer value, which leads to customer satisfaction, which in turn assists the agency in fulfilling its mission.

As a first step in helping agencies accomplish that goal, the Georgia Merit System (GMS) and the Governor's Office of Customer Service, facilitated by the Department of Administrative Services, screened assessment vendors using the Request For Qualified Contractors (RFQC) process.

This rigorous process identified four highly competent vendors - Development Dimensions International, the Valtera Corporation, Brainbench, and Profiles International. These vendors met or exceeded all of the essential criteria of the RFQC and can provide state-of-the-art processes for selecting new employees for customer service jobs.

assistance to agencies working with assessment vendors. The relationship is most effective if the first step in the process is for the agency and GMS to share information on implementation steps and issues, including how to communicate the new process to applicants, how applicants can apply for the job, how testing will be conducted, when the testing will to start, how the test results will be imported into the state's applicant database (i.e., the Job Site), and when the agency wants to start hiring applicants screened by the new test.

If the agency wishes, GMS can score the tests and upload the results into the Job Site applicant database. Test results can be provided to the applicants and the agency via the Job Site and related GMS software applications. Each applicant's Job Site account will be updated to show an overall score; the overall score and percent correct on each test content area are sent to each applicant by mail. The agency can then access the Job Site database to see list of applicants passing the test.

Any agency needing assistance with administering a written test may contact GMS, Dick Gonter, Strategies Manager at (404) 657-2079, or at [dgonter@gms.state.ga.us](mailto:dgonter@gms.state.ga.us).

## What are Life-Stage Benefits

With multiple generations employed in businesses, the concept of one benefit plan fitting all is illogical. Many future-oriented employers have begun tailoring benefits to where the employee is in his or her stage of life. It's called Life-Stage Benefits. This recruiting option widely appeals to younger workers. The flexibility that the plans offer attract job candidates who are recent grads just finishing college. Areas where this approach is most plausible include life and disability insurance or retirement savings. The main objective of Life-Stage Benefits is to inform and thus engage more employees about benefit options' relevancy and necessity in each stage of living. The plan increases employers' ability to market how their benefit offerings – a major consideration in recruitment – meet the needs of each generation in their workforce.

## EEOC Targets Systemic Discrimination

The EEOC published its Systemic Task Force Report, in which it concluded that identifying and investigating systemic discrimination, and litigating when systemic discrimination is present, should become a top priority for every employer.

The report listed 100 specific action oriented recommendations to enable the EEOC to become more effective in uncovering, fighting and remedying systemic discrimination.

The agency's efforts will focus heavily on race and gender discrimination, race being the most frequently basis alleged in employment discrimination complaints.

# Legal News



## The U.S. Supreme Court Broadens Retaliation in the Workplace

State entities should be aware of a recent ruling by the United States Supreme Court redefining employer behaviors that could be considered as retaliatory.

On June 22, 2006, the United States Supreme Court rendered its decision in Burlington Northern & Santa Fe Railway Co. v. White, thereby expanding the legal definition of Title VII based retaliation.

Sheila White originally brought the matter as an internal sexual harassment/ hostile work environment complaint. White worked for Burlington Northern as a forklift operator. Upon the completion of an internal investigation, it was determined that White's supervisor had in fact harassed her and created a hostile work environment. The offending supervisor received a suspension without pay and mandatory Sexual Harassment training. However, at roughly the same time, White was transferred from the forklift position to one involving substantially more manual labor at the same hourly rate and previous work schedule. White in turn filed a Title VII sex discrimination and retaliation complaint with United States Equal Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

After her transfer, White filed a second retaliation complaint EEOC based on the allegation that she was subjected to daily surveillance.

White was later suspended for 37-days, without pay, based on an insubordination allegation made by her new supervisor. She appealed the

suspension through the internal mechanism and was reinstated with back pay. A third retaliation charge was filed upon her reinstatement from the suspension.

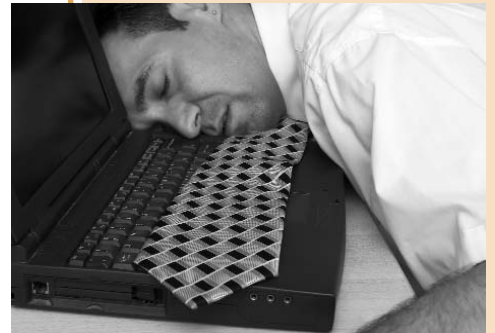
The case was litigated in the federal district trial court and later appealed to the federal circuit court of appeals. White was victorious at both the trial and appellate court levels on the issue of retaliation, while Burlington Northern prevailed on the sexual harassment issue. Burlington Northern appealed the unfavorable appellate court retaliation decision to the United State Supreme Court and it was argued before that tribunal in April of 2006.

Until the Burlington Northern decision, the federal appellate courts deferred among themselves as to the standard necessary in order to prevail in a Title VII based retaliation action. In this case, the court cited several types of non- employment and workplace behavior that could qualify as retaliatory: filing false criminal charges; and a government agency failing to follow policy when the physical safety of an employee and his family are at stake.

What does this mean to you as an agency or department head? The definition of what actions can be characterized as retaliation has broadened. Consequently, since there are more employer actions that meet the test for retaliation, it is now easier for employees to prove retaliation in court.

In order to forestall an increase in retaliations complaints, it is now necessary to educate supervisory staff and above as to the new standard, and to preclude the reoccurrence of those actions that were not considered retaliatory before the Burlington Northern decision.

## Employees who don't rest enough often dissatisfied with job



A recent University of Florida study found that employees who do not sleep at night rate job satisfaction lower than their rested colleagues. While insomnia is commonly known to hamper an individual's daytime functioning, the report indicates how lack of sleep negatively impacts how employees feel about their job. Not surprisingly, the effects were most significant in women who commonly experience more restlessness than men although gender lines diminish as people age. In another survey by Springer Netherlands, sleep deprivation was also linked to job productivity due to increased absenteeism and reduced work hours. Moreover, poor sleep contributes to reduced work capacity in areas such as concentration, listlessness, and difficulties in making decisions.

# Recruitment Using Technology?



**E**ver considered Google or Yahoo in determining the best job candidate for the vacant position you've been advertising? Internet search engines are being used to help companies learn more about individuals in their applicant pool. In a survey by ExecuNet, an executive job search and recruiting network out of Norwalk, Connecticut, about 77 percent of recruiters and hiring managers are increasingly utilizing Internet search engines to find out additional information concerning job applicants. Personal information, now increasingly available online, provide background information to companies private not otherwise disclosed on a job application. According to Dave Option, ExecuNet CEO and founder, first impressions are being formed before the interview process actually begins. It's a new way businesses are leveraging technology to ensure their success in recruiting the right person for the job.

## Manager Self Service

**T**he State Accounting Office rolled out Manager Self Service feature of the PeopleSoft HCM system statewide on November 1st. What is Manager Self Service? Manager Self Service provides the ability for a manager/supervisor to view personal and job related information about their employees on-line via the PeopleSoft system web page. The following information can be viewed for employees assigned to you:

- Employee Personal Information (ex. home and mailing addresses, email addresses, phone numbers, emergency contact, birthday)
- Job Information (ex. memberships, honors and awards, competencies, languages, training, education, licenses and certificates, compensation history)
- Benefit Information (ex. leave balance)

For more information about Manager Self Service, contact your agency's HR department.

### Employers, employees differ on workplace morale & loyalty



**A** survey of nearly 3,000 adults in the nation found that employers' and employees' views on company loyalty and moral often differ. The 2006 Employee Review poll by Randstad Staffing Agency found that:

- 55 percent of employers considered company morale as "excellent/good," compared to only 38 percent of employees having the same opinion
- 41 percent of employers believed the company as loyal to employees while only 25 percent of the employees agreed
- 72 percent of employers rated employees as loyal to the company. Only 56 percent of employees agreed.
- 81 percent of employees said they stayed in a job they didn't like just to have employment.

### Are you an effective leader?

- The greatest evidence of an effective leader is the success of his/her followers
- Effective leader = Results
- An example of an effective leader: The example the leader sets

# ASK THE EXPERTS

**Q** Can an agency require employees to use paid leave in conjunction with Family and Medical Leave (FML) and why does it matter?

**A** The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) is the federal law that allows eligible employees to take up to twelve (12) weeks of job-protected leave in a 12-month period for qualifying illnesses and certain family matters. This leave may be unpaid leave or paid leave, if the employer has a paid leave program. The leave, whether paid or unpaid, must still be designated as Family and Medical Leave (FML) for it to count against the employee's 12 weeks maximum. Further, making this designation is the responsibility of the employer and must be done within two (2) business days of acquiring the knowledge that the leave is being taken for an FMLA qualified reason. The Act essentially places a duty on the employer to inquire into the reasons for extended employee absences, even for vacation time (annual leave) in order to make the determination of FMLA applicability.

The FMLA provides that the employee may choose to substitute paid leave for unpaid FML. It also provides that if an employee does not choose to substitute accrued paid leave, the employer may require the employee to substitute accrued paid

leave for FMLA leave purposes. Best practice is to have a guiding policy in place.

Designating qualifying absences as FML begins to satisfy the 12-week legal obligation to the employee. If an employee uses undesignated paid leave before going on FML, the employer remains under legal obligation to provide the full 12 weeks of FML if the condition lingers or for any subsequent qualifying condition or situation. The 12 weeks of FML begins to run upon the approval of an employee's FML request or when the employer designates an employee's current leave as FML from a specific date forward. Except under specific circumstances, an employer cannot make the FML designation retroactive. The obligation for the employer to provide 12 weeks of FML exists until it is satisfied.

This article is intended only to indicate an area of the FMLA that requires close attention. Employers should always seek assistance from their Human Resources Office and/or legal counsel in matters dealing with the Family and Medical Leave Act.

General questions regarding the Family and Medical Leave Act can be addressed to Georgia Merit System Employee/Management Relations staff members Sam Clonts - (404) 656-2660 or Gail Stowers (404) 651-6302, or e-mailed to rule-info@gms.state.ga.us.

**Submit questions for "Ask the Experts" to [chenderson@gms.state.ga.us](mailto:chenderson@gms.state.ga.us)**



**Georgia Merit System**

2 Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr. SE  
Suite 502, West Tower  
Atlanta, GA 30334

Raymond E. (Steve) Stevenson, *Commissioner*

### **Executive Vision**

*Communications and Marketing Division*

Deborah Williams, *Director*

Carletta Henderson-Youngs, *Editor*

*Submit articles or questions to  
[chenderson@gms.state.ga.us](mailto:chenderson@gms.state.ga.us)*