

An Overview of Wisconsin's Employment Relations Statutes
With Emphasis on the Municipal Employment Relations Act

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I. Development of Wisconsin's Labor-Management Relations Laws

-Private Sector -- WEPA precursors since mid-30's, WEPA '39
(Wisconsin Employment Peace Act, Sec. 111.01 et seq.)

-Municipal Sector -- MERA precursors since '59, MERA '71, med-arb '78, '86 amendments, '93 amendments, '95 amendments (removed interest arb sunset; made teacher QEO permanent; changed general employee interest arb criteria; authorized expanded case filing fees to fund five existing WERC professional staff positions), '97 and '99 amendments (minor revisions of teacher QEO); '09 amendments (QEO repealed, school int arb criteria revised, school duration max 4 years, school unit combinations by self-determination votes authorized, expired cba fair share and gr arb given hiatus effect, teacher prep time made mandatory subject in 2011); 2011 changes, among other things, required general employees and newly hired public safety employees to pay at least half the annual pension contributions and to pay at least 12% of premiums if covered by State plan insurance; made collective bargaining unlawful for all general employees regarding all subjects except base wages up to the CPI, required general employee representatives to achieve 51% support of eligibles in annual recertification elections; in public safety unit bargaining, made health insurance carrier and coverage prohibited subjects and made local economic conditions an arbitral criterion to be given greater weight than any other; outlawed fair share and dues checkoff for general employees; and limited contract terms to one year; 2011 changes do not apply to transit employees.

(Municipal Employment Relations Act, Sec. 111.70 et seq.)

-State Sector -- SELRA precursors since '65, SELRA '71, coverage expanded over time to include UW program, project and teaching assistants, assistant district attorneys, and UW Hospitals and Clinics Board employees; 2011 changes, among other things, required general employees and newly hired public safety employees to pay at least half the annual pension contributions and to pay at least 12% toward health insurance premiums; made collective bargaining unlawful for all general employees regarding all subjects except base wages up to the CPI; repealed non-compellable non-binding fact finding for general employee units; required general employee representatives to achieve 51% support of eligibles in annual recertification elections; outlawed fair share and dues checkoff for general employees; and limited contract terms to one year.

(State Employment Labor Relations Act, Sec. 111.80 et seq.)

-UW System Faculty and Academic Staff Sector -- UWSFASA created in '09 (University of Wisconsin system Faculty and Academic Staff Labor Relations Act, Sec. 111.95 et seq); 2011 Wisconsin Act 10 repealed this law altogether.

-distinctive common elements:

- contract enforcement jurisdiction,
- grievance arbitration,
- a single multi-function and multi-sector agency

-effects of federal law on scope of state jurisdiction

- limits on WEPA due to NLRA preemption
- constitutional limits (if any) on federal public sector preemption

-context in which public sector statutes developed/exist

- constitutions
 - due process; equal protection; separation of powers
 - freedom of association vs public sector union security
- general powers statutes -- split public employer authority
- taxpayer and other interest group politics replaces private profit concerns
- civil service statutes -- procedures, rules, substantive protections
(2011 changes mandate minimal due process protections re discipline and safety)
- special wage, benefit and working condition statutes
- uneasy overlay of legislated bilateral labor-management relationship
 - primarily-related test for MERA mandatory subjects
 - not-contrary-to-command-of-law test for MERA illegal subjects
- patchwork and change as characteristics of public sector laws

II. Key Elements of Wisconsin's Employment Relations Statutes

- WEPA purpose statement -- balance interests of employees, employers, and public
- pre-2011 MERA purpose: encourage voluntary settlement through collective bargaining if employees chose to be represented; if bargaining fails, provide fair, speedy, effective and above all peaceful procedure for settlement.
- jurisdictional parameters -- relationships to which law applies
- employee rights to engage or not in collective bargaining and other lawful concerted activities free of interference and discrimination
- private sector right to strike;
- public sector strikes prohibited altogether; penalties for strikes violating injunctions
- definitions of who is protected and who is regulated -- exclusions of supervisors, managerial employees and confidential employees
- "rules of the game" -- prohibiting certain practices and defining scope and nature of bargaining -- mandatory, permissive, prohibited//illegal subjects; public sector scope of mandatory bargaining severely narrowed for public sector general employees in 1011
- complaint procedures for preventing/remedying unfair and prohibited practices
- declaratory ruling procedures for resolving scope of bargaining disputes
- bargaining unit definitions -- public safety vs general, craft, professionals, anti-fragmentation, community of interests

- methods for selection of bargaining representative -- exclusivity and its limits; duty of fair representation
- authorization of union security agreements, if any -- public safety unit fair share and dues checkoff; WEPA all-Union agreement and dues checkoff
- methods for resolving bargaining impasses -- mediation, interest arb or fact-finding, if any.

III. Resultant Roles of Wisconsin Employment Relations Commission

- rule making
- adjudication
- unfair labor practice/prohibited practice complaints (booklet available)
- representation and referendum petitions
- scope of bargaining and other declaratory ruling petitions
- fee setting for certain WERC services (fees list available)
- mediation of interest and grievance disputes
- gatekeeper of impasse resolution processes, if any
- interest arbitrator or/fact finder appointment -- ad hoc lists;
- recruitment and training of interest arbitrators
- grievance arbitration -- staff, staff lists, ad hoc lists
- conduct of representation elections and union security referendums, including annual recertification elections regarding public sector general employee units
- encouragement and support of labor management cooperation activities
- public information services for groups, classes and training programs
- information gathering, reporting and publishing

IV. Basic Nature of Wisconsin Employment Relations Commission

- not OSER, not ERD or LIRC of DWD, not DOL, and not WEAC.
- independent agency, 3 commissioners, 6-year terms, 1 chairperson
- professional staff -- general counsel, team leaders, in Madison and out-state
- support staff -- elections supervisor, publications sales
- headquarters office in Madison -- PO Box 7870, Madison; (608) 266-1381
- hearings/mediations normally conducted near parties' locations

OVERVIEW OF THE INTEREST ARBITRATION PROCESS UNDER SEC. 111.77, STATS.
AND WERC RULES CH. ERC 30

Non-supervisory public safety police-fire contract negotiation impasses in jurisdictions of 2500 or more are subject to final offer package arbitration as provided in Sec. 111.77, Stats and WERC Rules Ch. ERC 30, which is outlined below. However, both supervisory and non-supervisory City of Milwaukee police contract negotiation impasses are subject to a different arbitration process in Sec. 111.70(4)(jm) under which the arbitrator decides each disputed issue without being limited to selection of a party's final offer.

Except where the parties have mutually agreed upon a different procedure, and until an unconditional settlement is reached, the statute provides the following steps shall be followed:

1. notice to other party and WERC of intent to commence negotiations of new or successor agreement or terms of reopener in existing agreement
2. bilateral negotiations
3. mediation by WERC member or staff member on request of either party or WERC
4. investigation by WERC member or staff member upon petition or stipulation
 - a. mediation or further mediation as appropriate
 - b. determination whether conditions precedent to initiation of interest arbitration have been met
 - c. execution of stipulation of unconditionally agreed upon items
 - d. exchange of final offers -- except for parties' first contracts final offers must specify a contract term of 2 years with no reopener provisions other than savings clauses, unless the parties have agreed to a different term of agreement in their stipulation of agreed items; 3 years maximum duration
 - e. deadline set for raising objections based on alleged non-mandatory status of subjects in other side's offer and for filing petition for WERC declaratory ruling to resolve any such objection
 - f. further investigation following declaratory ruling issuance, if any
 - g. close of investigation by WERC investigator (when parties decline to further modify position with knowledge of other side's contemplated final offer; close of investigation precludes subsequent unilateral modification of offers).
5. WERC issues order initiating interest arbitration and supplies list of five individuals from its ad hoc arbitrator list (individuals not employed by WERC and deemed by WERC to be qualified by their education and experience to serve as interest-arbitrators. Final offers become public documents upon the issuance of WERC order initiating medarb, and the offers are available to the public from WERC upon request.

6. parties advise WERC of interest arbitrator selected and WERC issues order appointing the outside interest arbitrator

7. arbitration by interest arbitrator

- a. arbitrator may attempt to mediate. Parties may change their final offer only with consent of other side. Binding consent award may be issued resolving the dispute if the parties mutually agree to that procedure
- b. arbitration involves a hearing (open to the public) at which parties present evidence and arguments as to why their respective offer is more reasonable under the following statutory criteria:
- c. weight to the following other factors:
 - local economic conditions (to be given greater weight than any other factor)
 - employer's lawful authority
 - parties' stipulations
 - interests and welfare of public and employer's ability to pay
 - "comparables" i.e., wages, hours and conditions of employment comparisons with other employees performing similar services
 - cost of living
 - overall compensation
 - changes in the foregoing during pendency of the arbitration
 - other factors normally or traditionally considered by interest arbitrators
- d. after receiving written post-hearing arguments, if any, from the parties, arbitrator issues final offer package award selecting one or the other of the final offers in its entirety.
- e. parties are obligated to pay half of the interest arbitrator's fees and expenses.

8. interest arbitration awards are thereafter subject to court enforcement and limited judicial review under Sec. 788.10, Stats.

9. copies of awards are published on WERC website

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A NOTE ABOUT THE POLICY OBJECTIVES OF WISCONSIN'S FINAL OFFER PACKAGE ARBITRATION PROCESS:

Wisconsin's interest arbitration process for municipal public safety unit impasses appears to have been designed to meet constitutional requirements that there be standards for arbitrators' decisions, appointment of arbitrators by a state agency, and availability of at least a limited judicial review of awards; to provide a peaceful means of dispute resolution with interest arbitration substituted for the strike in almost all cases; and to encourage voluntary settlement of disputes through bargaining, mediation, investigation, and arbitration processes.

The default system of final offer package arbitration for municipal public safety unit impasses is designed to pressure the parties to narrow or resolve their dispute on their own or through state agency mediation rather than risk a substantial set-back in arbitration. The extent to which arbitrators are prevented from achieving optimally equitable awards by the either-or limitation

is considered outweighed by the increased deterrence of arbitration use and the high policy value placed on voluntary settlement of disputes.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING UNDER WISCONSIN'S INTEREST ARBITRATION LAW FROM THE MEDIATOR-INVESTIGATOR'S PERSPECTIVE

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I. INTRODUCTION

What follows are some observations regarding the nature of the mediation process generally and the ways it works in the context of statutory interest arbitration.

While the "investigation" process referred to is that provided for in Sec. 111.77, many are the same as those involved in conventional interest arbitration under Sec. 111.70(4)(jm).

These observations represent just one viewpoint among several regarding possible approaches to the problems discussed, and they are not necessarily the viewpoint of the WERC.

II. DESCRIPTION OF MEDIATION AS A PROCESS

A. In private and state sector and some municipal cases:

- ordinarily provided by a governmental service: sometimes by private ad hoc neutrals
- ordinarily free of charge; ad hocs charge, of course
- generally consensual, that is:
 - initiated only upon agreement of the parties
 - mediator has no authority to require either side to agree or even to meet; depends upon ability to persuade parties in those regards
 - primarily as regards contract negotiation (interest) disputes
- grievance mediation is also available, though not widely utilized

B. General functions mediation can perform:

- clarify: get information and get it straight: get positions; remind parties of clear legal principles and responsibilities, etc.
- filter out personalities
- create some degree of confidence that movement will be reciprocated; that progress is possible and settlement within reach
- narrowing alternatives under discussion; focus thinking on realities and major issues requiring most attention
- impact intra-caucus relationship and conditions preventing or discouraging settlement: e.g. press for hard decisions concerning priorities, etc. to be made; help leader or boost moderate voices' efforts to overcome unreasonable minority influences -provide: a scapegoat; a foil; an injection of levity; a prod; a stern voice; voice of reality;

a source of optimism or of creative suggestions -provide impetus to keep going long hours; to get back together -a means of testing other sides willingness or resolve without showing weakness

C. A mediator cannot be expected to be:

- a crutch to do your bargaining for you

a universally reliable means to wear down the other side; a proponent of your position alone

- a means of avoiding costing calculations or research or decisions

- merely a means to move to the next statutory step in dispute resolution

- able to provide intensive and creative work re large number of issues

- available indefinitely or where no progress is made or available at a moment's notice

- able to work effectively without being taken into caucus and confidence

D. WERC's general expectations of those conducting a mediation:

- attempt to get in touch with the parties promptly to schedule meeting

- make reasonable efforts to accommodate joint requests for scheduling on a particular date or offer to attempt to transfer the case to someone who can accommodate the parties' request

- make at least some efforts to coordinate trips with other cases (though no 100 mile requirement currently)

- get a settlement if one is at all possible, but do not unduly waste the parties' time or your own if a settlement appears clearly unattainable

- exercise sound judgment on whether to meet again and when

- work out disputes about mandatory/permissive subject disputes, if possible, before giving up on possibility of a voluntary settlement

- avoid blow-up that results in unnecessary impasse, litigation or dissatisfaction with the process

- make sure the parties feel every alternative was carefully explored

III. TECHNIQUES USED BY WISCONSIN MEDIATORS IN FULFILLING THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES

A. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

- Techniques vary considerably from individual to individual and situation to situation - based on style and experience of mediator, mediator's familiarity with parties and issues and several factors relating to parties noted below.

- Mediators are allowed considerable flexibility and independence to adjust their techniques to their personalities and personal styles. They must be comfortable to be of greatest service and assistance to the parties they are working with.

B. MEDIATORS FACE DILEMMAS IN ATTEMPTING TO BALANCE:

- risks to mediator's credibility inherent in pressuring parties vs. retaining the parties' trust, respect and comfort with the process and the mediator

- need for expeditious handling of case vs. need to give parties reasonable opportunity to make informed choices and to exercise care in drafting offers and agreements

-desire to obtain a settlement if at all possible vs. adverse consequences for bargaining and mediation processes if either party feels misled, taken advantage of, or ineptly or inappropriately dealt with by the mediator

C. SITUATIONAL FACTORS THAT CAN AFFECT TECHNIQUES UTILIZED:

- are the parties: experienced // or inexperienced:
- knowledgeable about the law, about how to negotiate effectively, about one another, about existing comparables and other factors bearing on likely bargaining outcomes // or not
- concerned only about impact on instant unit and employer // or also concerned about reputation, keeping this and other clients, this and other units, organizing still others, other bargains, etc.
- excitable // or level-headed
- are the leaders flexible and the team or principals tough // or vice versa
- are the leaders secure // or are they worried about job, holding unit or members, maintaining unity, etc.
- are the teams authorized to move and deal // or are they on short strings
- is this a good and mature relationship of longstanding // or is it a new or historically hostile one, e.g., history of litigation and/or strikes and strife in past, political sabotage, table and rejection treachery, etc.
- are the parties: optimistic, egotistic, pessimistic, fatalistic
- is there strong administrative staff, strong line management, strong elected or appointed officials, strong local union leadership, strong union staff person, etc.
- are there many issues // or relatively few
- are there other pattern-setting settlements already in place // or not

D. TECHNIQUES TYPICALLY USED DURING A MEDIATION

1. Before meeting with the parties:

- telephone calls to principal representatives to obtain basic information about the dispute and to work out date for meeting
- letter confirming date, time and location of meeting, and asking for contract and bargaining positions in writing

2. At the outset of initial meeting:

- meet with both parties together in a joint session -introduce self to each member of each team
- have parties sign in on sheet with their titles (a "scorecard")
- gather general information concerning, size and composition of unit, history of negotiation, status of predecessor agreement, etc.
- explain role of mediation and its limits
- discuss approach to confidentiality – assure parties mediator will maintain confidentiality of indicated flexibility when requested to do so
- inform parties that mediator may suggest: tradeoffs, compromises, alternative solutions to problems, ideas to consider
- urge parties to share their true concerns, priorities and reasons.

- audit the issues in joint session: proposal, status quo, other party's response position
- obtain copy of old agreement
- clarify status of pre-mediation tentative agreements
- get sense of: evident priorities, number of issues, interest groups within unit, personal concerns of individuals at table
- make some tentative and quick judgments about how to best proceed

3. Subsequent to initial joint session:

- separate the parties and caucus separately with each to learn parties' priorities, reasons, bases for concerns (desire it, others have it, problems or non-problems during administration, etc.)

- encourage parties to reduce number of issues outstanding by:

- drop for drop

- this for that

- compromises

- drop "without prejudice"

- ask "what if" they proposed this, would you accept it (no risk of showing weakness, etc) (may be mediator's or other party's idea)

- encourage response with different package if package is not entirely acceptable

- listen and watch for clues to possible solutions or compromises

- allow caucus opportunities when requested or when appear likely to be useful; sparingly knock on door during long caucuses to ask how caucus is going

- avoid doing anything that will reduce parties' confidence and trust -- keep clear distinction between what other side says and what mediator is personally appearing to endorse or suggest; don't take "no" for an answer too early

- request further explanation of position

- request parties' priorities

- probe priorities or concerns by asking what is underlying concern and seeking means of achieving the objective while avoiding objectionable aspects from other side's point of view

- suggest packaging of items for trade-off, drop for drop, etc.

- explore or initiate other approaches to generate movement such as:

- non-monetary items first, then money

- solve the knotty issue and others will be easy

- clear away easier issues to give momentum and focus

- group or regroup issues or take them one at a time

- take the time to attempt to change a party's unrealistic view of consequences of non-agreement..

- encourage parties to be realistic in terms of consequences of move or non-move

- mediator's substantive suggestions or sharing of opinions about potential outcomes can be risky and often unhelpful if offered too early, but can be more effective once mediator is trusted and viewed as competent and well-informed

4. If it appears that settlement may not be achieved:

- make sure parties each know exactly why that happened and what risks they are taking by not settling

- decide how to proceed in face of non-settlement:
 - another meeting
 - another meeting if movement is indicated by date certain
 - continued exchange of offers by parties
 - mail-in exchange and telephone evaluation of usefulness of another meeting

5. Upon achieving a settlement:

- close with care to avoid post-write-up or post-ratification misunderstandings -- keep the parties at the meeting to make sure the tentative agreement terms are mutually understood the same way – though participants may be tired, end of meeting at which agreement is reached is usually the best time and atmosphere to review the agreements reached and preferably to reduce them to a written summary that is reviewed and approved by all participants
- determine when and in what order ratification will be undertaken
 - stress value and need for recommendation and effective selling of the package by both of the bargaining teams

E. ADDITIONAL TECHNIQUES USED ON OCCASION BY SOME MEDIATORS

- suggest the parties negotiate further on their own or exchange certain information before mediation meeting is set up or convened
- meeting with one party where lengthy discussions/explorations are needed
- extended or reconvened joint session for exchange of information, discussion of complex issue, establishment of bargaining history, etc.
- “chance” or semi-planned meeting in hallway, restaurant etc., with one or both chief spokesperson(s)
- openly arranged meeting with one or two representatives of each side
- inter-meeting communications with principal representatives
- post-meeting meetings between the parties without mediator for further bargaining, exchanges of information, etc.
- post-meeting submissions to or through the mediator
- mediator’s proposal to be presented to union membership and employer governing body
- public announcement of mediator’s promise to both sides (rare)
- cooling-off period before scheduling of another session
- mediator serving as spokesperson in response to press inquiries, if parties mutually agree - call upon parties to refrain from public statements and press releases for a period of time
- call in additional mediator for assistance (rare)
- call upon both sides to pare down to specified number of issues
- personal plea to one or both to do or not do something

IV. DIFFERENCES IN MEDIATION PROCESS WHERE DISPUTE IS SUBJECT TO FINAL OFFER INTEREST ARBITRATION

Mediation preceding final offer interest arbitration differs from the private and state sector mediation described above, in the following ways.

- NOT WHOLLY CONSENSUAL (can be invoked by either party or the Commission)

-NOT WHOLLY PRIVATE (results of unsuccessful mediation are a matter of public record)

-PARTIES DO NOT HAVE THE LAWFUL RIGHT TO SAY "NO" (no right to strike or lockout, and lawful strike is subject to court imposed arbitration if found to harm public health or safety)

-NOT PROCEDURALLY STRAIGHT FORWARD (i.e., not merely a choice by the parties whether to jointly call in a mediator or not). Rather, A COMPLEX COMPULSORY PROCEDURE IMPOSED BY LAW CULMINATING POTENTIALLY IN A FINAL AND BINDING OUTSIDE ARBITRATOR'S DECISION. Process designed to encourage the parties to maximize voluntary settlements and minimize extent of resort to third party decisions by:

-MANDATORY MEDIATION by WERC and possible agreed-upon follow-up mediation by interest arbitrator with award-selection authority.

-MUST REDUCE FINAL OFFERS ON MANDATORY SUBJECTS TO WRITING

-FINAL OFFERS NOT UNILATERALLY AMENDABLE AFTER CLOSE OF WERC INVESTIGATION

-MUST PARTICIPATE IN PROCEEDINGS BEFORE OUTSIDE ARBITRATOR attendant costs and delays if no voluntary agreement

-RISK OF ARBITRATING HEIGHTENED BY LIMITING ARBITRATOR TO SELECTION OF ONE PACKAGE OR THE OTHER without compromise (unless the parties agree on some other form of arbitration), and hence increasing the potential consequences of non-settlement.

-UNCERTAINTY OF OUTCOME HEIGHTENED by BROAD STATUTORY CRITERIA with NO MANDATED WEIGHTING and subject to limited administrative and judicial review. Decisions have generally emphasized internal and external comparables and have placed burden on the party seeking to change a historical arrangement or relationship

-PROCESS PROTECTED FROM MOST DELAYS BUT EXPRESSLY SUBJECT TO DELAY FOR PROCESSING OF DISPUTE AS TO MANDATORY/NON-MANDATORY NATURE OF PROPOSAL. Objections can be timely raised at any time prior to close of investigation.

V. ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MEDIATOR IN DISPUTES SUBJECT TO FINAL OFFER ARBITRATION

-GATHER INFORMATION that forms the basis for the agency's subsequent determination of existence of an impasse and substantial compliance with conditions precedent to the initiation of the arbitration procedures;

-OBTAIN a mutually executed STIPULATION of items on which the parties unconditionally agree to be bound regardless of the outcome of a subsequent arbitration proceeding;

-CONDUCT EXCHANGES OF contemplated FINAL OFFERS;

-CLOSE THE INVESTIGATION -- step which ordinarily cuts off the right of either party to further change its final offer absent permission from the other side. Under WERC rules and

decisions investigator is to close only when satisfied that each side with knowledge of the contemplated final offer of the other has no further move to make, and only after no further timely objection to non-mandatory nature of a proposal is pending;

-and REPORT THE SUBSTANTIVE RESULTS of the investigation to the Commission and through it to the mediator-arbitrator and the public in the form of the stipulation of agreed items and the parties' ultimate final offers.

VI. SOME OF THE GENERAL PROBLEMS THE MEDIATOR-INVESTIGATOR FACES

-the mediator is more than at the parties' consensual service; the mediator is also an administrative agent responsible for processing the dispute as provided by law: sometimes the administrative purposes are contrary to those of one or both parties

-some parties resent the imposition on their former prerogatives and demonstrate their frustrations by varying degrees of non-cooperation, delay, objections, declaratory ruling petitions and other litigation.

-parties can come to look upon arbitration as a means of avoiding responsibility for settling some or all of the issues, or as a means of resolving the dispute without need of ratification.

-parties can view the process as one in which there is little incentive for the other side to stretch to achieve a settlement

-parties may expect another "kick at the cat" when the outside arbitrator mediates – expecting that although the offers are unamendable without mutual agreement, that the interest arbitrator will be able to overcome any unwillingness on the other party's part to permit a modification of final offers.

-parties may feel they need to "hold something back" for the interest arbitrator rather than revealing the full range of their possible flexibility prior to that step in the procedure.

-parties may come to the mediation or investigation without a full understanding of the relatively complex realities imposed by the final offer system, the mechanics of final offer exchanges, the significance of the close of the investigation, the risks involved in pursuing a particular proposal or overall position, or the need for detailed preparation in advance of arbitration.

-parties may conclude that it is in their best interests to delay or to speed up the process in order to avoid or take advantage of existing or developing comparables, cost of living or other elements of proof that will not or may not be as advantageous or disadvantageous with the passage of time. Parties may object that proposals of the other are non-mandatory subjects as a means of prolonging the process generally or for tactical advantage.

-parties may be unwilling to submit a "final offer" when it is called for by the investigator; others may become frustrated at the other party's or the investigator's failure to follow through on commitments concerning when the final offer exchange will be completed.

-the mediators' dilemmas are often more sharply presented, requiring a balancing of:

-risks to mediator's credibility inherent in pressuring parties (calling for final offers, threatening to close the investigation, emphasizing risks of arbitral setback) vs. retaining the parties' trust, respect and comfort with the process and the mediator.

-benefits of a frank discussion of comparables and risks of arbitration vs. concern about directing attention toward something other than a complete settlement through mutual accommodation and mutual problem solving

-need for expeditious handling of case vs. need to give parties reasonable opportunity to make informed choices and to exercise care in drafting final offers and stipulations

VII. MEDIATION TECHNIQUES PARTICULARLY APPLICABLE IN MEDIATION INVESTIGATION

-make certain that the parties understand the process and the realistic alternatives available to them in it at any given time, and make informed choices including:

-general costs and delays inherent in arbitrating; the more issues outstanding, the greater the potential cost and delays in preparing, presenting and having the case decided

-possibility that investigation will close with party in disadvantageous position, potentially foreclosing further modification of final offer--can't rely on mediation by mediator-arbitrator

-reduce risk of arbitration loss by avoiding long list, unusual cost, sore thumbs, unjustifiable resistance to other's proposals, unjustified proposals for changes in status quo or deviation from historical relationships or arrangements

-create settlement incentives for the other side by offering

-"stick" -- make your offer reasonable but have it hurt other side on item(s) they're vulnerable on, i.e., a "zinger" if you can find one

-"carrot" -- offer better terms if settle without arbitration -- solve problems for other side they couldn't hope to fix through arbitration

-early revelation of both may move things along

-draft and work around uncertainties of litigation re prohibited practice allegations, objected-to subjects of bargaining, unsettled areas of law

-at least narrow issues if you can't settle all of them -- saves money and time with the outside arbitrator and perhaps reduces risk of loss

-possible that full or partial settlement can provide some outcomes that arbitrating cannot:

-non-mandatory subjects

-complex issues requiring mutual efforts to achieve a workable solution

-issues that would be sore-thumbs or at least detract from reasonableness of a package

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE PARTIES ON EFFECTIVE USE OF THE MEDIATION AND MEDIATION-INVESTIGATION PROCESSES

-use the mediator's time effectively

-know what mediator can do and can't be expected to do for you (noted above)

-don't over-utilize mediation -- try to get down to manageable number of issues before resorting to mediation; sometimes a bilateral meeting before a scheduled mediation session can be useful

-be ready to work, to reconsider, to go long, to work between meetings

-cooperate as much as possible regarding scheduling, submitting preliminary final offers and other documents, etc.

-give the mediator enough time to get the job done --

-try to avoid limitations on the time you and your team have available for mediation

-let the mediator know in advance of limits on availability of you or various members of your team; it may affect the mediator's timing and pace

-know the law and your options under it; learn your WERC mediator's ground rules and expectations and know the limitations on what the mediator can expect/require either party to do

-come prepared --

- have costing issues discussed between the parties and resolved by the time the mediator arrives

-get authority to bargain meaningfully and try to know the limits of your authority, the reasons for your proposals, and your priorities

-have some alternatives in mind or on paper that you would consider

-have an idea what you are likely to offer as an arbitration position if an acceptable settlement is not achieved

-help the mediator to be effective and credible in both rooms -know your contract and your proposals and help the mediator to quickly become familiar with the differences between them

-know the people involved in the bargain and help the mediator get to know them quickly

-confide in the mediator --

-trust the mediator to maintain confidences, but tell the mediator when you expect the mediator to do so.

-share your problems and your reasons and other information as openly as possible; if the mediator knows what your goals and priorities and concerns are, the mediator can most effectively try to achieve them for you and help the other side to do the same and/or help the other side understand why your side is unwilling or reluctant to agree to some alternative.

-don't harm the mediator's credibility with the other side --

-don't monopolize the mediator's time

-don't appear unduly familiar with or friendly with the mediator

-use the mediator to try ideas you prefer not to have proposed on your behalf, but don't expect the mediator to unconditionally recommend settlement entirely on your terms.

-level with the mediator -- misleading or not informing mediator about important aspects of an issue or the relationship only to have the other side spring them on the mediator by surprise, causing the mediator to lose credibility in the other room. You are welcome to maintain your informal lines of communication with the other side, but share what you hear through them with the mediator to validate or correct the information or impressions your informal sources have given you.

-allow the mediator to show the other side both a stick (your likely offer for arbitration) and a carrot (your more attractive offer for settlement) giving the other side something to lose if they choose not to settle

-be willing to share your data and rationale supporting your anticipated arbitration proposal; this may enable the mediator to cause the other side to be less certain of victory in an arbitration or less convinced that their proposals are more reasonable than yours

-keep in mind that:

MEDIATORS DIFFER as to experience, talents, background, styles, personalities, schedules, workloads (decision writing and mediation), particular day (health, family problem, long drive, lack of sleep, lack of food, etc.)

-some mediators view mediation as most enjoyable, others as the least enjoyable; some as the most rewarding others as the least rewarding of their functions.

MEDIATORS TEND TO HAVE CERTAIN BIASES. They are:

- committed to collective bargaining process as means to peaceful resolution of disputes and for translating relative power into words
- settlement oriented – believe best settlement is the one the parties hammer out themselves
- they may consider it a defeat if parties do not reach total voluntary settlement

MEDIATORS MAY BE RELUCTANT TO:

- give unqualified advice on legal issues
- do costing/computations
- to make judgments about who's being reasonable or what is "right"
- to carry threats
- to create bargaining history -- prefer that parties do it face to face

MEDIATORS, AS ALL NEUTRALS, NEED TO AVOID APPEARANCE OF PARTIALITY

- not appearing to lean only on one party
- not spending much more time in one caucus than the other
- paying for own meals
- not appearing more friendly or familiar with one party than with the other

MEDIATORS TEND TO DISFAVOR CONDUCT THAT UNDERCUTS THEIR EFFECTIVENESS

- treating mediator as member of other side, as mere messenger, as insignificant
- disregard of previous procedural commitments
- lack of authority or lack of preparation
- unwillingness to work long hours
 - unnecessarily emotional interactions with mediator or other side
 - unduly long caucuses to do costing of proposals, prepare basic documents, determine priorities or overcome inability to make group decisions.
- sessions that are ultimately unproductive
- disputes about what was or was not tentatively agreed upon before mediator arrived
- parties treating processes away from table as the inevitable locus of ultimate dispute resolution; parties not letting mediator know about external developments or processes that are having major impact on the dispute
 - unilateral .attempts to greatly speed up or slow down processing of the dispute regardless of the status of the negotiation
 - failure to have tentative agreements in contract language form
 - failure to have costing, proposals, former agreement, other related documents available for the mediator at or in advance of first meeting
 - taking unreasonably long to get post-meeting paperwork submitted
- keeping the mediator out of the caucus much of the time
- failing to level with the mediator early or at all
 - misleading the mediator about facts, priorities, etc.

MEDIATORS TEND TO APPRECIATE CONDUCT THAT ENHANCES THEIR EFFECTIVENESS OR RECOGNIZES THEIR POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE PROCESS

- opposite of the above items, including:
 - costing methods agreed upon or at least discussed with other side
 - dry run costings of various alternatives to current position completed before meeting;
- or tools needed to do amended costings available during meeting
 - appropriate size of committee – large enough to have authority to move without constantly consulting others; not so large as to lack the ability to meet at reasonable times and to reach decisions reasonably quickly
 - people who know problems and contract available
 - clearly identify your chief spokesperson so mediator knows whom to address and whose indications are to be taken as those of the team
 - hearing promptly from parties re scheduling, re settlement ratification or non-ratification and re problems with scheduled dates as soon as they develop.

IX. SOURCES OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT MEDIATION

- excellent booklet: Guide for Labor Mediators (1976) by Eva Robins with Tia Dennenberg; Industrial Relations Center, University of Hawaii, 2404 Maile Way, Honolulu, Hawaii 96822
- more thorough treatment:: Mediation and the Dynamics of Collective Bargaining (1971) by William Simkin; BNA Books, Washington, DC.

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Wisconsin Public Sector Bargaining Timeline

Marshall L. Gratz – Fall 2011

- 1959 Legislature enacts authorization for public sector collective bargaining – meet and confer system.
- 1971 An enforceable duty to bargain is imposed as to municipal employees. Good faith bargaining is required as to mandatory topics of bargaining: wages, hours and terms and conditions of employment. Parties are prohibited from bargaining over items that are contrary to law or fundamental public policy – closed shop, or racially discriminatory seniority systems, for example. Bargaining is permissive as to all other items – employers and unions may bargain over them, but are not required to if they don't want to.
- 1971 Interest arbitration is provided for protective employees (Police and Fire (MIA)) as to mandatory topics of bargaining.
- 1977 Hortonville teachers' strike.
- 1978 Interest arbitration is provided for non-protective employees (teachers, DPW, etc. (Med/Arb)), as to mandatory topics of bargaining.
- 1993 The Qualified Economic Offer (QEO) is introduced, sharply limiting the availability of interest arbitration for school teachers based upon a 3.8% package increase and the maintenance of fringe benefits.
- 2009 The QEO is repealed; Faculty and academic staff bargaining for UW system; Home Health Care bargaining unit established; Statutory factors for interest arbitration revised; Card check system for research assistants; grievance arbitration and fair share continued through the contract hiatus period; preparation time is prospectively made a mandatory topic of bargaining in schools; changes to teacher evaluation plans made a mandatory topic of bargaining; miscellaneous technical changes to bargaining unit determination rules and interest arbitration rules.
- 2011 Governor's Budget Repair Bill – Collective Bargaining Provisions**
- State Patrol Troopers and Inspectors, and municipal Police and Fire exempted.
 - Collective bargaining for U system faculty and academic staff is abolished.
 - UW Hospitals and Clinics Authority collective bargaining is abolished.
 - Day care and home health care provider collective bargaining is abolished.
 - Collective bargaining agreements are limited to one year in duration, and may not be extended.
 - Interest arbitration is abolished, except for Police and Fire.

- Collective bargaining in units of general employees is restricted to base wage rates. All other items are rendered prohibited topics of bargaining – public employers may not legally bargain other wages items, fringe benefits, hours, or terms or conditions of employment.
- Negotiations over base wage rates may not result in an agreement to increase base salaries by an amount more than the consumer price index as measured 180 days earlier, unless prior authorization has been received through a public referendum vote in the jurisdiction specifying the amount of the increase in excess of the consumer price index. If the consumer price index declines, the outcome of collective bargaining over base wages cannot exceed a decline equal to the decline in CPI. No limitations on wages for non-represented employees. Employers can unilaterally increase or decrease all other forms of employee compensation.
- It is illegal for any employer to enter into a Fair Share agreement, other than with Troopers, Inspectors, Police or Fire.
- It is illegal for any employer to deduct union dues from the checks of union members, other than Troopers, Inspectors, Police or Fire.
- The WERC must conduct annual elections in all public sector bargaining units to determine whether the union should be “recertified.” The elections are to be conducted in April 2011 for all state employee units and other units with contract extensions, and thereafter prior to May 1 for general municipal employees and prior to December 1 for school district employees. In order to remain certified, the Union must receive a supermajority of at least 51% of all employees in the bargaining unit, without regard to how many employees actually vote.
- Employers who participate in the Wisconsin Insurance Board group insurance plan are prohibited from contributing more than 88% of the cost of the premium for any employee, other than Troopers, Inspectors, Police or Fire.
- Employers are prohibited from contributing any portion of the employees actuarially required contribution to the Wisconsin Retirement system for any employee, other than Troopers, Inspectors, Police or Fire. This restriction extends to retirement plans in the City of Milwaukee and Milwaukee County as well. No unit of local government is permitted to establish a defined benefits pension plan which does not require full employee payment of 50% of the actuarially required contributions to the plan.
- All municipal employers are required to establish civil service systems for their non-Police and Fire employees (Joint Finance Committee amendment). Such a system must allow grievances to be filed over discipline and safety issues and for a hearing to be held before an impartial hearing officer. The employer’s governing body is the last step in the grievance procedure.

2011 Budget Bill – Collective Bargaining Provisions

- Emergency Medical Personnel, and Municipal Mass Transit employees, are added to the exemptions.

- The selection and content of health insurance plans, and the impact of decisions concerning selection and content, are made prohibited topics of bargaining for public safety employees. Premium contributions continue to be mandatory topics.
- Newly hired police and fire employees are subject to the same retirement and health insurance contribution levels as are applicable to general state and municipal employees.
- Recertification elections for all state employee units and municipal employee units under a contract extension are to be completed by the end of October 2011.
- The General Counsel of the WERC is transformed from a civil service position to a political appointee.
- As to the bargaining over base wages, if the CPI does not increase or decreases, base wages are frozen.