

# Legislative Alert



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## **SENATE LABOR COMMITTEE TO HEAR TESTIMONY ON RETIREE DUES DEDUCTION BILL -**

A bill that would allow retirees to choose to have union dues deducted automatically from their pension checks has been scheduled for a public hearing on Tuesday, Feb. 9 in the Capitol. The Senate Labor Committee, chaired by AFSCME member Sen. Spencer Coggs (D-Milwaukee), will hear testimony on SB 390, authored by Sen. Dave Hansen (D-Green Bay). Sen. Hansen and AFSCME representatives have been working for months to fine-tune the dues deduction legislation. In the spring of 2009, a variation of SB 390 was inserted in the budget, but was removed later in the budget deliberation process.

**IMPORTANT UPDATE ON THE PROTECTIVE STATUS BARGAINING BILL – AB 634** - For two decades, AFSCME has worked to get lawmakers to grant protective occupation participant status for county jailers. This session, we worked with other unions to prepare a bill that would make protective status a mandatory subject of bargaining, for county jailers and those state employees who work in secure institutions.

Unfortunately, AB 634 is stuck in the Assembly Corrections Committee, without sufficient “yes” votes to get a positive report from the Committee. **If you have not yet called, emailed or talked to your own state Representative and your own state Senator to ask them to support the bill, the time to do so is now.** We need to find out how all members of the Assembly intend to vote on AB 634. We are working on a plan to get it out of Committee. In the meantime, we need you to contact your Legislator. ***The message is: Please support AB 634, and tell me how you intend to vote on the bill, if and when it comes to the full Assembly (or Senate).*** Be sure to include your home address, and please refrain from emailing Legislators other than your own area Legislators.

**COUNTY JAILER LEGISLATION BEING CIRCULATED** - Rep. Garey Bies (R-Sister Bay) is circulating a bill that would confer protective status benefits on county jailers throughout Wisconsin. The proposal has no bill number yet, but is temporarily known as LRB 4003/1. We will monitor this proposal and how it might affect our efforts on AB 634.

**RETURN 17-YEAR-OLD OFFENDERS TO JUVENILE COURT** - This week, Rep. Fred Kessler (D-Milwaukee) introduced a bill that would keep 17-year-olds under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court, rather than the adult system. While most agree this change is needed, few agree on how to pay the costs associated with keeping teen offenders in the juvenile system. Teens that end up in the adult correctional system are treated like any other offender – and the state of Wisconsin pays the costs, with general tax dollars.

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However, the costs of treating teens in the juvenile correctional system (whether in the community or in the three state-run juvenile schools) are paid for by counties, with property tax dollars. Kessler's legislation would partially fund the costs by tacking a surcharge onto traffic offenses. His legislation would make other changes in the way juvenile correctional costs are managed. AFSCME supports giving teens under age 18 a chance to remain in the juvenile system, but we cannot support any change in state law that would jeopardize the juvenile schools or put further constraints on already limited county resources.

Last session, some lawmakers proposed similar legislation, and would have partially funded it by imposing a surcharge on video games.

**UPDATE ON SB 429/AB 644: WORKER'S COMPENSATION PRESUMPTION FOR INFECTIOUS DISEASES** - On Tuesday, Feb. 9, the Senate Labor Committee is slated to take up SB 429, the Senate version of the worker's compensation presumption bill. The Assembly companion, AB 644, got a unanimous vote from the Assembly Labor Committee on January 27. We have asked Assembly leaders to take quick action on AB 644.

**COMPETING INTERESTS SEEK BOOST IN SALES TAX FOR KEY SERVICES: MILWAUKEE PARKS, TRANSIT, SCHOOLS** - A bill that would authorize Milwaukee County to increase the county sales tax and use the revenue to pay for parks, culture and recreation was approved on a straight partisan vote of 6-4 by the Assembly Ways and Means Committee on Jan. 25. The Committee amended the bill, AB 504, to specify certain parks and other services would be funded with the revenue. The amendment also would require an annual audit of the tax. AB 504 has been referred to the Joint Committee on Finance.

Another bill that is generating discussion about hiking the sales tax, is Senate Bill 205, which would allow proposed regional transit authorities to increase the local sales tax to fund transportation services. The RTA legislation will be taken up by the Senate Transportation Committee on Thursday, Feb. 4.

On a separate track, school finance reform advocates have long been calling for an increase in the statewide sales tax to provide additional resources for schools. The group has not developed a bill that lawmakers could act upon.

Vital services such as schools, parks and transit already were struggling with anemic resources before the economic downturn, which has made things worse. The grassroots efforts underway in each of these areas merits close attention and discussion among our ranks.

For more information, contact the AFSCME lobbyists at 608-836-6666 or go to the Wisconsin AFSCME website, [www.wiafscme.org](http://www.wiafscme.org).