



DANE COUNTY

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Newsletter Column

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A Stark Contrast Brings Savings

Column By: Dane County Executive Joe Parisi

For the past year there has been a debate across Wisconsin about worker's rights – specifically, the right of public employees to collectively bargain. Some will tell you that this practice of working with our workers, instead of against them, has little value.

I couldn't disagree more. Not just because treating everyone with respect is the way that I lead, but because I know this process works.

Just last week Dane County became the only known county in Wisconsin to take advantage of a little known state law, allowing for a limited amount of time to negotiate agreements with public workers to achieve savings. Together with our employees, we got it done.

I negotiated with our employees an across the board wage reduction of 1.25% through 2013, netting a savings to taxpayers of \$1.9 million next year. These savings will be accomplished through phasing-in the contributions employees make to their retirement along with three furlough days.

This agreement is significant for many reasons. We proved yet again that negotiating with workers, works. The largest unions representing Dane County's workforce are also agreeing to essentially take home the same amounts in their checks in January of 2014 as they are today - - January of 2012.

Would you agree to allow your employer not to give you a raise for the next two years? This sacrifice by our workers - - who are our friends, neighbors, and family - - is deserving of our appreciation and recognition. They know we are in challenging times, through no fault of their own, and are stepping forward to help protect core county services.

We do things differently in Dane County. What we accomplished in the past week is a stark contrast with the way business is done at the state level. Had our state leaders tried a similar approach a year ago would families and communities across our state be as divided as they are today? Unfortunately, we will never know.