



AARP Comments on SB 1144
AN ACT CONCERNING FLEXIBLE WORK SCHEDULES AND
TELECOMMUTING OPTIONS FOR STATE EMPLOYEES
Government Administration & Elections
March 23, 2009

AARP is a nonprofit, non-partisan membership organization for people age 50 and over. We have more than 40 million members nationwide and over 629,000 in Connecticut. As a leading voice for older Americans, AARP has long been supportive of flexible work arrangements that allow older people to continue working well past retirement age.

While AARP does not take a position on how the state should manage its workforce or contractual obligations with employees, we do broadly support the principles outlined in S.B. 1144, which would create flexible work arrangements for state employees including older workers.

AARP believes that public and private employers should be encouraged to provide more flexible work options, such as alternative work schedules, flextime, telecommuting, job-sharing, bridge jobs, phased retirement at prorated compensation, and retiree reemployment programs. We also support the use of flexible work options in lieu of layoffs whenever possible during economic downturns or temporary downsizing.

AARP also believes that employers should adopt phased retirement programs that encourage employees to stay in the workforce beyond the time they would normally plan to retire and that protect the adequacy of their pension and retirement benefits for the time that they do fully retire. We believe that public and private agencies should be encouraged to provide employees with information about partial retirement programs (incorporating but not limited to job-sharing, part-time work, and progressive reduction of work hours).

As an agency, AARP offers flexible work schedules and phased retirement options to our staff and we encourage public and private corporations to use flexible work arrangements & phased retirement as a best practice to retain older workers.

AARP has a number of resources available for employers on best practices to retain older workers and annually we recognize employers nationwide that exemplify these practices. Two sample resources have been included with our testimony for your reference. AARP has been, and will remain, on the front-line in educating employers, policymakers and the media about practices that meet the needs of the maturing workforce. Please feel free to consult AARP policy studies and resources when considering flexible work arrangements for state employees and as a means to retain older workers.

self-esteem

competitive pay

enjoy working new skills

technology health benefits

Staying Ahead of the Curve 2007

The AARP Work and Career Study

age-friendly

one job security

accomplishment

flexible hours

helping others

below provides a checklist of examples and action steps illustrated with best practices from pioneering companies, large and small, including many current and former AARP Best Employers. The **Survey Highlights and Implications** includes an overview of the key findings from the survey of workers ages 45 to 74 as well as more examples of relevant employer practices. Additionally, businesses will find AARP's online **Workforce Assessment Tool** a speedy way to analyze and address their current and future vulnerabilities.

The AARP Workforce Assessment Tool »

The AARP Workforce Assessment Tool, available at www.aarp.org/employerresourcecenter, is a free, online planning resource that companies can use to quickly gauge their exposure to potential skill shortages. Customized charts of key jobs and functions provide a snapshot of workforce demographics, workplace practices, possible challenges, and projected hiring needs. The site includes suggestions for short- and long-term staffing and knowledge retention strategies.

Blueprint for Change

This checklist of recommendations and examples of best practices⁴ can spark workforce planning discussions about flexible work arrangements, benefits, diversity and fairness, positive environment, ongoing training and development and other essentials attractive to older workers.

- » **Use the AARP Workforce Assessment Tool** to assess current workforce needs and practices and to identify job functions and divisions most vulnerable to mass retirement.
- » **Survey employees' opinions** about current company practices. Employee feedback can help in crafting new programs and creating an "age-friendly" company brand. For example, at employees' request, the financial services firm Vanguard instituted compensation redesigns, paid time-off packages, and numerous work/life initiatives. A "Great Place to Work" employee survey at Scripps Health in San Diego encouraged management to implement an eldercare and professional care management program at the hospital system.
- » **Flexible schedules, policies and work arrangements** attract and retain top talent—these choices are among most older workers' ideal job attributes. For example, Mercy Health System's "Work to Retire Program" allows 50-plus employees the option to work reduced hours, pool or work at home. Full-timers at the Janesville, WI health care system can job-share or move to part-time work permanently or temporarily. Another example is The Home Depot's "snowbird special." Depending on business needs, high-performing associates who reside in different parts of the country at different times of the year may be able to transfer between different Home Depot locations near their homes.⁵ First Horizon National Corporation, a Memphis-based financial services firm, offers flexible work options such as prime-time employee status (employees with at least one year of service reduce work hours to 20 to 32 hours/week and maintain full benefits), formal flex-time (employees work a non-traditional schedule), informal flex-time (employees adjust hours

⁴ Unless otherwise noted, information on individual companies' best practices comes from the practices of the 2007 AARP Best Employers for Workers Over 50 listed on the online AARP Employer Resource Center (<http://www.aarp.org/money/careers/employerresourcecenter/bestemployers/winners/2007.html>, retrieved May 2008).

⁵ Towers Perrin, *The Business Case for Workers Ages 50+: Planning for Tomorrow's Talent Needs in Today's Competitive Environment*, a report prepared for AARP by Towers Perrin, (2005), p. 87.

occasionally as a need arises), and telecommuting/flex-place (employees work at home or other location). Phased retirement is offered to full-time employees on a case-by-case basis at Noblis, Inc., an engineering research firm in Falls Church, VA.

- » **Offer competitive health and other benefits** to recruit and retain age 45-plus workers. Even part-timers who work a minimum number of hours per week receive full medical benefits at Bon Secours Richmond Health System and the YMCA of Greater Rochester—including vision and dental insurance. Adecco USA, the Melville, NY-based division of the global staffing company, offers its full-time staff long-term care insurance, exercise facilities and lunch-time seminars on financial planning, health and other relevant topics.⁶
- » **Recruit retirees.** A database of highly skilled retirees familiar with company culture provides an on-call talent pool to train new hires or staff short-term projects. For example, retirees with specialized professional and technical knowledge can take temporary positions at Argonne National Laboratory. The MITRE Corporation's Reserves at the Ready program allows retirees to sign up to be on call for part-time assignments.⁷ Frankford Candy and Chocolate Co. of Philadelphia has fewer than 100 retirees, but invites them back for part-time work. Additionally, Proctor & Gamble and Eli Lilly are the initial founding client companies of YourEncore, a third-party placement agency that matches experienced scientists and engineers with companies needing help on short-term projects.⁸
- » **Hire a retiree relations specialist** to communicate with former employees, invite them to events and build a database of names to call on for short-term

projects. Most current and former AARP Best Employers have such a designated position.

- » **Restructure the job or the workplace** to accommodate employees' unique needs later in life. Structural changes, procedures, equipment and tools can be added or redesigned to help keep experienced workers on the job. Lee Memorial Health System in Fort Myers, FL, instituted a "transitional work program" to accommodate workers who are temporarily or permanently disabled or otherwise unable to perform their job duties. If the original job cannot be modified, the worker is moved into another position. Brevard Public Schools in Viera, FL, assists employees with special needs by providing telephones with amplified audio equipment, custom-ordered furniture, and large screen/print computer monitors.
- » **Recharge late-career workers with up-to-date training.** Career counseling, special assignments and open career paths provide the personal growth and development that many older workers seek. At John Deere, the industrial equipment and commercial machinery company in Moline, IL, employees are provided with growth opportunities by participating in temporary assignments in other departments, team projects and job rotations. George Mason University in Fairfax, VA, partners with county and city governments to offer programs designed for the adult learner.⁹
- » **Consider knowledge retention strategies** such as cross-training, mentoring, coaching, shadowing and exit interviews to help pass on key information. At Baptist Health South Florida¹⁰ in Coral Gables, senior nurses who mentor junior colleagues receive financial incentives.

⁶ Morton, p. 16.

⁷ Mercer Human Resource Consulting, *Staying Ahead of the Curve 2004: Employer Best Practices for Mature Workers*, prepared for AARP by Mercer Human Resource Consulting, (2004) p. 34.

⁸ YourEncore web site (www.yourencore.com, retrieved May 27, 2008).

⁹ AARP, "Training and Professional Development: Practices of the 2007 AARP Best Employers for Workers Over 50": (http://www.aarp.org/money/careers/employerresourcecenter/retention/training_and_professional_development_practices_of.html, retrieved May 28, 2008).

¹⁰ AARP, "Mentoring Programs Benefit Employers and Employees" (www.aarp.org/money/work/articles/mentorprogs.html, retrieved May 27, 2008).



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AARP Workforce Assessment Tool
Assess your workforce needs and strengthen your company's ability to attract and retain talent.

Resources
AARP SmartBrief
AARP SmartBrief is a biweekly e-mail news update on the changing workforce.
Retirement Made Simpler
A step-by-step guide for employers on how to automate your 401(k) plans.
Publications from AARP
Learn about workplace trends and practices related to 50+ workers.
Saver's Credit
Help your employees learn more about this little-known tax break.

AARP Programs
National Employer Team
Become an AARP National Employer Team member and profit from experienced workers.

2008 AARP Best Employers for Workers Over 50
This annual recognition program honors companies and organizations who value the 50+ workforce.
2008 AARP International Innovative Employers
See which 10 international employers are recognized for valuing 50+ workers.

Employee Benefits Best Practice: Ochsner Health System
To stabilize its workforce and retain more of its experienced workers, the health system helped managers develop and implement retention strategies, which included promoting Ochsner's extensive menu of benefits.

Best Practices for Managing an Aging Workforce
These companies know that one way to stay competitive is to make their jobs more attractive to qualified and skilled workers, regardless of age.

Staying Ahead of the Curve
Gain insight on creating age-friendly workplaces with the AARP Work and Career Study, a new report examining the experiences, opinions, and expectations of workers age 45-74.

Help for Laid-Off Workers
During economic downturns, your company may be faced with letting workers go. Help your mature workers make the transition into new job opportunities.

AARP Financial Benefits
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