



West Sound Human Resource Management Association

# West Sound Happenings

October 2005

*Save The  
Date*

## Monthly Luncheons

### **October 2005**

No Meeting due to  
NHRMA Conference  
Bend, Oregon  
October 10 - 12

### **December 2005**

Holiday Luncheon  
and  
SHRM Foundation  
Silent Auction

Awards Presentation

December 14, 2005  
11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Speaker: De Hicks,  
Stuart Consulting

Free to WSHRMA  
Members

Please continue to check  
our website at  
[www.wshrma.org](http://www.wshrma.org)  
for updated information on  
the above events.



## **WSHRMA HALF DAY FALL CONFERENCE BUILDING AND KEEPING HIGH-PERFORMING TEAMS PRESENTED BY: BY ALICE ROWE, PHD NOVEMBER 9, 2005— SILVERDALE RED LION INN**

Plan to join us for our half day workshop that is a great compliment to our Spring Conference presented last May on working with teams. As HR professionals and managers we are all aware how important it is to have effective teams in our organizations. Come hear the latest on how to build and keep your teams performing at a high level!

Learn the key elements of high performing teams and identify ways to move your team toward those elements. This highly interactive session will also focus on ways to encourage collaboration. You will leave with an action plan of ways to help your team be stronger and more effective.

Dr. Rowe creates and delivers training programs for business, industry, government, and the professions. She provides tools for enabling clients to increase performance by developing strong management skills and building effective teams. Her innovative and enthusiastic presentation style has generated a high demand for her services. Dr. Rowe also facilitates retreats and meetings, helping the group stay focused and energized.

Fall —Cont. page 3

## **RSVP by November 4, 2005**

Date: November 9, 2005

Time: 7:30 a.m. to Noon

Place: Silverdale Red Lion Inn

Price: Member\*:

Prepay \$40; at the door \$45

Non-Members\*

Prepay \$55; at the door \$60

RSVP: [wshrma@artanderson.com](mailto:wshrma@artanderson.com)  
360-479-5600 x2265



**RED LION  
SILVERDALE HOTEL**

3073 NW Bucklin Hill Road  
Silverdale, WA 98383

360-337-8800

Payment may be made at the door or by completed the registration form found on our website ([www.wshrma.org](http://www.wshrma.org)) and mailing to the address on the form.

\*Cancellations must be received at least 2 days prior to receive refund.

**HR**

**LEADING PEOPLE  
LEADING ORGANIZATIONS**

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## Become A Member

Are you interested in a SHRM Membership or transferring your membership to our chapter? Please give Sharlene Harrigan, VP of Membership a call with any questions. 360-478-2366 or e-mail at [sharlene@pchsweb.org](mailto:sharlene@pchsweb.org)

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## AFFILIATE OF



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## Job Bank

Please check out our website at [www.wshrma.org](http://www.wshrma.org) for current job openings. If you would like to advertise an open HR position in the WSHRMA job bank, please contact Debbie Laudenslager at 360-415-6533 or e-mail to [dlaudenslager@kpshealthplan.com](mailto:dlaudenslager@kpshealthplan.com)

## IN THE NEWS

SHRM.ORG



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### Congress set to work on key HR-related issues this fall

By Bill Leonard

After a month-long recess, Congress is set to reconvene on Sept. 6 with several HR-related issues high on its fall agenda.

As usual for the fall, the foremost legislative issue facing Congress will be passage of appropriations legislation. Among the bills yet to be approved is the funding package for the Department of Labor. Only two of the required 13 appropriations bills were passed and signed by President Bush before Congress adjourned for its August recess on July 29. However, Congress is a bit further along in the appropriations process than it was last year or the year before, according to several sources familiar with the issue.

While the appropriations bill for the Labor, Health and Human Services (HHS) and Education departments ([H.R. 3010](#)) did gain quick approval by the House of Representatives, the spending package may hit a few snags in the Senate. The biggest problem appears to be an extremely tight schedule; floor time in the Senate will be at a premium this fall as senators consider the nomination of John Roberts to the U.S. Supreme Court. The confirmation process is slow, and as the end of the fiscal year approaches—Sept. 30—there could be another mad dash to approve government spending packages by that deadline. However, an abortion-related provision to the Labor spending measure could also slow it down.

“The target adjournment date has been tentatively set for the first week of October, and if you talk to some Capitol Hill staffers, they’ll say that they can meet that date. But right now, it really looks doubtful,” said Mike Aitken, director of governmental affairs for the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). “Others who work with Congress are privately speculating that the fall session could extend into November and maybe even until Thanksgiving.”

If Congress does extend its session into November, then expect to see another omnibus spending package passed by Congress, Aitken says. Omnibus bills typically combine all the needed appropriations legislation into one package, and members of Congress usually will strip any controversial amendments out of an omnibus bill to ensure passage.

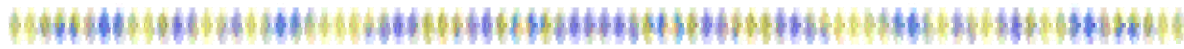
The Senate Appropriations Committee did approve the Labor, HHS, Education bill on July 14. However, the committee added an amendment offered by Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa., that would withhold federal funding from federal, state and local government agencies if they require health care workers to provide, assist or train others to perform abortions.

Supporters of Specter’s amendment say it clarifies confusing language in a similar measure included in the House-passed version of H.R. 3010. In addition, the House provision would withhold funding to agencies that require health care workers to provide referrals and advice on abortions to patients.

## FALL —CONT. FROM PAGE 1

A unique blend of corporate trainer, educator, and public speaker, Alice Rowe has worked in her profession for over twenty years and has consulted with over 100 diverse organizations. She designs her own materials, which have included a 40-hour training course entitled Supervision and Group Performance which was adapted by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management and used nationwide. As an educator, Dr. Rowe has taught on the community, college, and masters level.

- Doctorate in Human and Organization Development, The Fielding Institute
- Master's Degree in Public Administration, Syracuse University
- Bachelor's Degree in Political Science, Simmons College
- Author, *Where Have All the Smart Women Gone?*, a study of women and achievement



### Congress—Cont. from page 2

According to sources familiar with the issue, the two slightly different versions of the amendment could set up a confrontation between GOP conservatives who support the House-passed provision and moderate Republicans who support Specter's amendment. The full Senate has yet to give approval to the spending bill, but sources said they believe that the Senate will pass the spending bill with the amendment offered by Specter still attached.

The appropriations bill for the Labor, HHS and Education departments, however, does not contain any hotly contested workplace-related issues such as last year's attempt to rescind the new white-collar overtime regulations. Some political observers did indicate that proposed changes to the regulations governing the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) could create some political fallout, but the Department of Labor has yet to release its proposed changes.

Business and HR-related groups have been waiting for the department to release proposed changes to the FMLA regulations. DOL officials announced earlier this year that the revisions would be released in March.

### Pensions at center stage

Reform of the laws governing retirement benefits became a particularly hot issue in Congress after United Airlines in May announced a \$9 billion default on its pension plans. The pension defaults by United and several other large businesses, including Motorola and U.S. Airways, have put the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corp. (PBGC) in a bind, and a projected funding shortfall of \$23.5 billion at the PBGC added urgency in Congress to pass reform legislation.

The House Education and the Workforce Committee approved its pension reform package, [H.R. 2830](#), in June, and the Senate Finance Committee followed by approving the National Employee Savings and Trust Equity Guarantee Act ([NESTEG](#)) in July. The House bill was referred to the House Ways and Means Committee, and NESTEG moved on to the Senate Health Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee.

Political observers say that the Ways and Means Committee chair, Rep. Bill Thomas, R-Calif., intends to combine the pension bill with Social Security reform to create a comprehensive retirement package. The same observers say that the package could prove to be too cumbersome and controversial to gain full approval of both houses of Congress.

"We could possibly see that the 'must pass' provisions of the pension reform legislation get pulled out and passed as separate bills," said SHRM's Aitken. "But that's not likely to happen until other options and time run out."

The formula for calculating pension liabilities for plan sponsors will revert in January 2006 back to the 30-year bond interest rate unless a new law is enacted. The current formula is temporary and uses corporate bond rates, an approach favored by many plan sponsors. The reform proposals in the House and Senate would establish a permanent interest rate designed to help employers anticipate and fund pension obligations more accurately.

**Congress—cont. page 4**

### Congress—Cont. from page 3

“Without action on comprehensive reform this year, the interest rate will revert back to the 30-year Treasury rate, and there’s no indication of whether this rate would be an accurate measure of pension liabilities,” said Rep. John Boehner, R-Ohio, chair of the House Education and the Workforce Committee, in a prepared statement. “The status quo on pension reform is unacceptable, and Congress needs to complete action on comprehensive pension reforms this year.”

The underfunding of pensions by some plan sponsors and the possibility of more pension defaults present challenges that Congress must address before the end of the year, according to sources. The reform proposals include changes in funding rules to address the problems. However, the proposed funding requirements and increases to premiums that employers pay to the PBGC could raise costs of providing retirement benefits and create problems for many employers.

Sen. Mike Enzi, R-Wyo., chair of the Senate HELP Committee, has indicated that he supports most of the pension reform proposals. However, sources say he has issues with some of the funding mandates that the NESTEG bill would place on plan sponsors.

“Sen. Enzi has said that he intends to draft his own pension reform and that the HELP Committee staff was currently at work on the measure,” Aitken said. “It’s pretty clear that Sen. Enzi and Sen. Grassley [Charles Grassley, chair of the Senate Finance Committee], have some differing opinions on how to proceed, so it should be interesting this fall to see if these differences can be resolved.”

### Health care reform

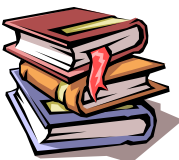
Congress has been making incremental changes on health care, such as passing the Patient Safety and Quality Improvement Act in late July, which President Bush signed into [law](#).

Other health care reform proposals that may gain attention this fall include the Fair and Reliable Medical Justice Act ([S. 1337](#) and [H.R. 1546](#)), which would create a new court system that specializes in medical malpractice litigation. At the end of June, Enzi introduced the Better Healthcare through Information Technology Act ([S. 1355](#)), which Enzi and supporters say is designed to make it easier for health care providers to use information technology and “thereby improve quality and reduce the costs of health care in the United States,” according to Enzi.

These health care reform proposals should receive some attention this fall, but no one should expect to see any major reform proposals passed soon. According to sources, the health care proposal could gain momentum if it gathers more bipartisan support. However the same sources indicate that a strong lobbying effort from the trial lawyers’ association means the bill has some formidable hurdles to overcome. The information technology reform plan, however, does appear to have a better chance of passage once Congress returns in September.

“Congress is clearly settling on the incremental and smaller-scope changes when it comes to legislating health care reform,” Aitken said. “But that’s not to say a major reform package won’t be enacted in the next year or two. The incremental changes we are seeing now could set the stage for some larger and more comprehensive reforms.”

*Bill Leonard is senior writer for HR News.*



### HRCI STUDY GROUP

The WSHRMA study group for the Human Resource Certification Exam is scheduled to begin soon. Meeting days and times are to be determined. If you are interested in joining the group contact Debbie Laudenslager at 360-415-6533 or e-mail at [dlaudenslager@kpshealthplans.com](mailto:dlaudenslager@kpshealthplans.com).

You may access detailed information on the HRCI exams, including cost, application process, registration deadlines, and other valuable information by visiting the website [www.shrm.org/hrci](http://www.shrm.org/hrci). You must be a SHRM member to be eligible to participate in the WSHRMA study group.

Fees: WSHRMA members— free.

All other SHRM Members (at large and other chapter members)— \$125

**THIRD ARTICLE IN A SERIES OF FIVE**  
**BUILDING COMPETENCE FOR CRITICAL CONVERSATIONS:**

**PART III—KEEP IT COMPLEX**

**BY: DOUG NATHAN, MEDIATOR AND CONSULTANT**  
**SOUND OPTIONS GROUPS, LLC**

While you're in that highly charged emotional state that signals you've entered into a crucial conversation, use questions as tool to deescalate your emotional responses and kick-start your rational thinking again. Our blood-starved brain tends to reduce complex situations to simple solutions. We tend to move to "either/or" thinking and see only two possible choices—I can do this *or* I can do that—both of which are often bad options.

For example, if you need to hold a discussion about performance with someone whose style annoys you, you might decide that the only way to give the needed feedback is to be direct and forceful so he might finally hear it, regardless of his feelings. Or you could say nothing about his behavior to preserve the peace and avoid an emotionally charged conversation. Either decision leads to less than satisfactory results for you, the other person and your organization. "Either/or" thinking characterizes false dilemmas and allows us to justify our own bad behaviors.

**"Yes" Thinking and Contrasting for Options**

A better option lies with "And" thinking and starts by clarifying what you do want, and what you don't want. In this case, you might clarify that you do want to give feedback to the person about how their lack of accountability impacts the work group, and you don't want to create a hostile work relationship or alienate him because success relies him engaging with the team. Now, combine what you do want with what you don't want by completing the following question:

Ask: I wonder how I can achieve \_\_\_\_\_ and avoid \_\_\_\_\_?

For example, you might ask, "I wonder how I can give him feedback about how missed deadlines affect the work of the group and avoid creating a hostile work environment or alienating him?" This question helps continue the re-engagement of your brain and allows you to begin to consider new possible options to give effective feedback that maintains relationships. Notice that your emotions continued to deescalate as your mind reengages.

Your ability to remain curious in the moment—to use questions that keep you focused on the result you intend—helps you reengage your brain and deescalate your emotional reactivity. Now, you are ready to make it safe for you and for others to hold a crucial conversation. *To learn how to make it safe, read next month's article.*



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Doug Nathan is a mediator and consultant with [Sound Options Group, LLC](#), offering consulting, training, and facilitation services for over eleven years. Sound Options Group helps local, state-wide and national organizations hold difficult conversations so they can manage change, develop leaders, and build high-performance teams. Doug is a certified trainer of *Crucial Conversations*<sup>®</sup>, a two-day course based on the *New York Times* best selling book that equips people with the tools to handle life's most difficult and important conversations and achieve positive results.

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