

**RESOLUTION  
ROCK COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

DAVE O'CONNELL, HUMAN  
RESOURCES DIRECTOR  
INITIATED BY



DAVE O'CONNELL, HUMAN  
RESOURCES DIRECTOR  
DRAFTED BY

COUNTY BOARD FINANCE  
COMMITTEE  
SUBMITTED BY

DECEMBER 26, 2013  
DATE DRAFTED

**APPROVING HEALTH INSURANCE BENEFITS FOR EMPLOYEES IN SAME-SEX  
RELATIONSHIPS WHO MEET ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**

1 WHEREAS, the County of Rock is an organization committed to non-discrimination, as expressed in  
2 applicable County ordinances and policies; and,  
3

4 WHEREAS, those non-discrimination ordinances and policies, include a commitment not to  
5 discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation or family status; and  
6

7 WHEREAS, many current employers, including the State of Wisconsin, several other Wisconsin  
8 municipalities, institutions of higher education, and private sector employers have extended employee  
9 benefits to same gender domestic partners and their dependents; and,  
10

11 WHEREAS, the County of Rock compensates employees through more than just wages and salary by  
12 providing a range of benefits to the employees, including health care, prescription drug coverage,  
13 dental insurance, and other employee benefits offered consistent with the traditional plan structure  
14 including opposite gender spouses and dependents of the County's employees; and,  
15

16 WHEREAS, extension of benefits, including health care, prescription drug coverage, dental insurance,  
17 and other employee benefits not currently required by law to be extended to same gender domestic  
18 partners and other dependents would increase the attractiveness of the County's employment benefit  
19 package, thus facilitating successful employee recruitment and retention; and  
20

21 WHEREAS, Wis. Stats. Sec. 40.02(21d) provides a definition of "domestic partners" for Wisconsin  
22 Retirement System and certain State health insurance benefit purposes and Wisc. Stats. Sec.770.01(1)  
23 also defines that term for the purposes of the Wisconsin Domestic Partnership Registry; and  
24

25 WHEREAS, the County of Rock finds that it is in the best interests of the County to extend  
26 employment benefits to domestic partners as that term is defined in Wis. Stats. 770.01(1);  
27

28 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the County Board of Supervisors duly assembled on  
29 this 23 day of January, 2014, hereby goes on record in support of allowing access to and offers  
30 health care, prescription drug coverage, dental insurance, and other employee benefits to domestic  
31 partners of County employees in the same fashion such benefits are extended to spouses of married  
32 County Employees. Such benefits shall be provided to the extent allowed by the IRS and otherwise  
33 allowed by law, specifically including any amendments or new enactments of Wisconsin laws relating  
34 to domestic partners, civil unions or same sex marriages; and should such amendments or enactments  
35 occur, such benefits shall be extended as allowed therein; and  
36

37 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the County will extend health care, prescription drug coverage,  
38 dental insurance, and other employee benefits to all qualifying domestic partners of County employees  
39 according to the following guidelines:  
40

- 41 1. The definition of domestic partnership of same gender couples used by the County of  
42 Rock will be that used by Wis. Stats. Sec. 40.02(21d) and 770.01(1).  
43

14-1B-498

- 44 2. The County of Rock shall require verification of current valid domestic partner  
45 registration pursuant to Wis. Stats. Chapter 770, the Domestic Partnership Act, or the  
46 documentation required by any subsequent change in state law.  
47
- 48 3. The provision of these benefits will be extended to the dependents of those same gender  
49 domestic partners as they would be to the dependents of legally married employees under  
50 the then current provision for dependent coverage in the relevant benefit program.  
51
- 52 4. The benefits provided to domestic partners and their dependents shall be as nearly equal  
53 as possible to those offered to legally married partners, including non-insurance benefits  
54 such as funeral leave for the death of a domestic partner and use of sick leave to care for a  
55 domestic partner.  
56
- 57 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this resolution shall become effective on March 1, 2014.

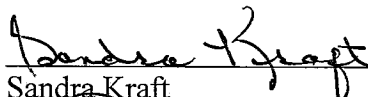
Respectfully Submitted,

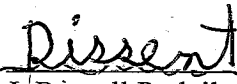
FINANCE COMMITTEE

  
Mary Mawhinney, Chair

  
Mary Beaver

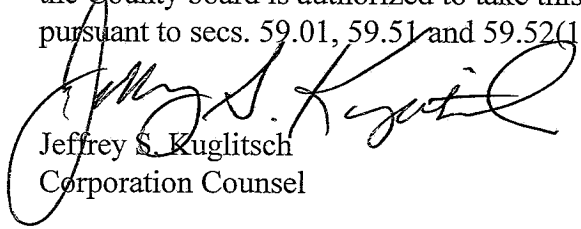
  
Brent Fox

  
Sandra Kraft

  
J. Russell Podzilni

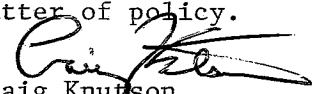
LEGAL NOTE:

In addition to the statutes mentioned in the resolution, the County board is authorized to take this action pursuant to secs. 59.01, 59.51 and 59.52(11), Wis. Stats.

  
Jeffrey S. Kuglitsch  
Corporation Counsel


ADMINISTRATIVE NOTE:

Extension of this benefit would make the County more competitive for employee recruitment and retention. In the final analysis, extension of this benefit is a matter of policy.

  
Craig Knutson  
County Administrator

FISCAL NOTE:

Based on the experience of other public employers, the cost may increase one-half to one percent. The health insurance trust fund would be used for the additional cost.

  
Susan Balog  
Sr. Accountant/Assistant to Finance Director

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COUNTY BOARD STAFF COMMITTEE

*Dissent*

J. Russell Podzilni, Chair

*Absent*

Sandra Kraft, Vice Chair

*Absent*

Eva Arnold

*Dissent*

Henry Brill

*Absent*

Betty Jo Bussie

*Marilyn Jensen*

Marilyn Jensen

*Mary Mawhinney*

Mary Mawhinney

*Dissent*

Louis Peer

*Dissent*

Kurtis Yankee

## APPROVING HEALTH INSURANCE BENEFITS FOR EMPLOYEES IN SAME-SEX RELATIONSHIPS WHO MEET ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Rock County Human Resources Office has been contacted by employees inquiring about why the County does not offer same-sex domestic partner insurance related benefits. In addition, this issue was raised by two of the eight non-law enforcement bargaining units during the 2013 meet and confer sessions.

This resolution is very similar to the one that the City of Beloit passed earlier this year and will take effect on January 1, 2014. It applies to same-sex domestic partners but does not apply to opposite-sex domestic partners. The last survey done by one of the other County Human Resource Directors showed that most public jurisdictions across the State of Wisconsin have not passed this type of Ordinance or a more expansive Ordinance covering both same-sex and opposite-sex domestic partners. However, the number of jurisdictions offering this type of coverage is currently increasing. For those jurisdictions using the State Health Plan they must offer both same-sex and opposite-sex coverage as part of that plan.

Rock County appears to be a leader in this effort along with Dane and Milwaukee County. Public jurisdictions in Rock County that have domestic partner insurance are: City of Beloit (same-sex only); City of Evansville; City of Janesville; City of Milton; City of Edgerton; the Janesville School District; and Blackhawk Technical College. The Beloit School District does not currently cover domestic partners but says it is going to revisit the issue in 2014. Dane County and several public jurisdictions in Dane County (including Madison) do cover domestic partners. Walworth County does not cover domestic partners.

It is difficult to estimate the number of Rock County employees who have a domestic partner. There are currently less than 100 people registered with the County Clerk's Office as having a domestic partner. Only a small percentage of those people would be Rock County employees. There could also be Rock County employees registered in other surrounding counties.

Since Rock County self-funds our health insurance plan the County takes on an unknown risk whenever it enrolls a new employee or dependent. The experience of other public employers indicates that adding domestic partners costs significantly less than 1% per year.

Rock County currently offers both State FMLA coverage and bereavement leave for domestic partners as defined by the Wisconsin Family and Medical Leave Act.