



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Happy New Year, members and friends!

Resolutions: So, have you made any New Year's resolutions this year? Is this the year to are going to become certified as PHR or SPHR? If so, it's time to register for the exam. Application registration opens January 11, 2010, for the spring 2010 testing period (May 1 – June 30, 2010). For those who are already certified, the HRA will continue to work to provide you with recertification credits for each of our monthly professional development meetings.

Approved for Credit: For all who attended our December professional development meeting, I trust you enjoyed hearing John Bloomberg discuss the method to become "Good to the Core." This program was approved for one hour of recertification credit through the HR Certification Institute. Unfortunately, we received approval after the meeting, so if you need the program number, please send me an e-mail at hra@hraoakbrook.org.

Reflections: As you know, 2009 has been an interesting year for businesses in general and for us in the HR field. The Obama administration has kept us on our toes — trying to keep track of the ever-changing legislative landscape affecting our employees and our businesses. Health care reform is gaining momentum, and the Employee Free Choice Act is lingering in the background, ready to come to the forefront when the time is right. Keep up to date on some of the ongoing, pressing legislative issues by attending our monthly professional development meetings. Each meeting features a 5 to 10-minute legislative update from our Governmental Affairs team of Neil Dishman and Greg Stobbe.

Programs: The upcoming professional development sessions will include a focus on Wellness & Health Planning, by Andrew Sykes from Health at Work Wellness Actuaries. Andrew will discuss best practices for creating an atmosphere of health and wellness at work. Our March program will highlight several employment law myths, and what you need to do to protect your company from financial and legal exposure.

Mark your calendars: Add the 11th Annual Illinois HR Conference & Exposition to your calendars! It is on Monday & Tuesday, August 2-3, 2010, in our own backyard at the Double Tree Hotel in Oak Brook, Illinois.

If one of your resolutions is to become more networked in the HR community, consider getting more involved in the operations of the HRA. Please contact me at hra@hraoakbrook.org to discuss volunteer opportunities.

Have a wonderful 2010. I look forward to seeing you at an upcoming meeting!

Greg Vos
President, HRA of Greater Oak Brook

Look Inside The Herald

President's Letter 1
SHRM Foundation News! 2
SHRM News 2
2010 SHRM Legislative Conference 2
COBRA Subsidy and UI Extension Signed Into Law 3
New Members 3
Certification Corner 3
Legislative Update 4
Schedule of Events 5

THE HERALD

YOU ARE INVITED

HRA Lunch Program - Social Media for HR Professionals

Please join us for HRA's January 12th lunch program, "Social Media for HR Professionals," with speaker, author, coach and ex-radio show host Wendy McCormick.

Social media participation is becoming an essential tool in networking with professional contacts, making new contacts, recruiting employees, and keeping in touch with the world. If you're not participating in the top social media and networking sites, the world is leaving you behind. Why not become involved on the social media Web sites? What's your experience participating on social media sites?

A broader view of business and social networking is that it creates a pool of contacts from which you can draw leads, referrals, ideas, and information for your job and career progress. You can network without ever attending an official business or social networking event, although attending events is useful in networking. Find out more about how to do business and social networking successfully.

Lunch will be served.

Where:

The Hyatt Lodge, 2815 Jorie Boulevard, Oak Brook, Illinois 60523, 630/990-2527

When:

Tuesday, January 12, 2010, 11:30 AM – 1:30 PM

Agenda:

Registration and networking: 11:30 am – noon
Lunch served: noon
Program ends: 1:30 pm

Don't forget to bring your business cards for networking!

Program cancellation policy:

Cancellations must be received by 5pm the Thursday prior to the meeting to be credited with a full refund. Cancellations received after this time will not be refundable.

FEE - Event Registration:

Table with 2 columns: Registration type and Fee amount. Includes Deferred/Pay@Door, HRA Member Pre-Pay, Non-Member Pre-Pay, Sponsored Guest Pre-Pay, and Student.

RSVP:

Tuesday, January 12, 2010

Recertification Credit:

This program is pending approval from the HR Certification Institute.

Good News!

The HRA's Tuesday, December 8th, 2009, Holiday Program has been approved for 1.0 (General) Recertification Credit toward PHR/SPHR/GPHR designations. Contact us via email at hra@hraoakbrook.org for the Program ID to update your online HRCI recertification credit hours at www.hrci.org.

Remember to check out HRA's Job Mart. Visit www.hraoakbrook.org for more information!





SHRM Foundation News! January 2010

Connecting Research to HR Practice

The SHRM Foundation awards grants to fund rigorous, original research with practical implications for management practice. The "Connecting Research to HR Practice" brochure presents the results of four recent SHRM Foundation – funded projects in an actionable way, so HR professionals like you can apply this knowledge in your organization. Topics in this 12-page brochure are: Making Virtual Teams More Effective; Increasing the Success Rate of New Executives; and Enhancing the Effectiveness of HR Practices and Stock Options.

Download a copy of the brochure free from
the SHRM Foundation website:

www.shrm.org/foundation/ResearchHighlightsBrochure.pdf.

SHRM News

Meisinger Fellowship for Graduate Study in HR Application deadline April 1, 2010

Applying to grad school for the first time to study HR? Applications are currently being accepted for the Meisinger Fellowship for Graduate Study in HR. Check out www.shrm.org/meisinger for information about the Fellowship.

Michael R. Losey Human Resource Research Award Application deadline January 19, 2010

This award is the premier source of funding for significant past and continuing contributions that impact the human resource management field. A single award of \$50,000 from the Michael R. Losey endowed research fund will be made annually to further the field of human resources. Nominations are encouraged for established human resource professionals in the field of HR. <http://www.shrm.org/about/awards/Pages/loseyaward.aspx>

2010 SHRM Legislative Conference

Early bird deadline extended until January 15, 2010

Next year's Employment Law & Legislative Conference, in Washington, DC, will be one of SHRM's most important events in the new year. The conference will be held March 17 to 19, 2010 — the time when the Obama administration and Congress will be making their final plans for what's possible to achieve before the midterm elections next November. The early bird deadline and discounted price have been extended until January 15, 2010. We urge you to register now to take advantage of the savings and to reserve your space.

Larry Miskowicz, Ann Fleming and Tom Turnbaugh of the Turnbaugh-Fleming Group of Wells Fargo Advisors

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Call us at 630-285-8852 to arrange a meeting to discuss the possibilities.

- Wells Fargo Advisors, LLC, member of SIPC, is a registered broker-dealer and separate nonbank affiliate of Wells Fargo & Comp.

COBRA Subsidy and UI Extension Signed Into Law

On Saturday, December 19, 2009, the U.S. Senate passed the Fiscal Year 2010 Department of Defense (DOD) Appropriations Act by a vote of 88–10. This federal spending bill included important provisions to both

1. Extend and expand the COBRA subsidy program that was enacted under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and
2. Extend expanded unemployment benefits through February 28, 2010.

The House also passed this same spending bill on December 16, 2009 by a vote of 395–34. President Obama immediately signed this bill into law (P.L. No: 111-118) after Senate passage on December 19, 2009.

COBRA

The COBRA subsidy program extension in the DOD bill (http://www.rules.house.gov/111/LegText/111_hr3326_hamnd.pdf) will:

- Expand the ARRA's COBRA premium subsidy period from nine to 15 months
- Change the end date for eligibility for the subsidy from December 31, 2009, to February 28, 2010
- Provide a retroactive period of 60 days (commences upon enactment) for payment of premiums for eligible individuals whose subsidy period expired on November 30, 2009
- Require a special notice outlining these changes within 60 days to all eligible individuals on COBRA on or after October 31, 2009, or those who are terminated after this date
- Clarify the original COBRA subsidy program, noting that eligibility and notice are based on the timing of the qualifying event

Unemployment Insurance

The DOD bill also provides an extension and expansion of unemployment insurance benefits. These changes are outlined below.

- The period during which individuals may file applications for Federal Emergency Unemployment Compensation (EUC) is extended from the current end date of December 31, 2009, to February 28, 2010. The period during which individuals may claim and be paid EUC is extended from May 31, 2010, to July 31, 2010.
- The period during which individuals may qualify for the Federal Additional Compensation (FAC), the extra \$25 weekly benefit amount on state and federal unemployment compensation, is extended from the current end date of January 1, 2010, to February 28, 2010, with weekly payment provided during the phase-out period for weeks ending June 30, 2010, to August 31, 2010.
- The period during which 100% federal reimbursement for weeks of regular federal extended benefit payments for states opting to trigger federal extended benefits based on the Total Unemployment Rate is extended from the current end date of January 1, 2010, to February 28, 2010, with the state option to continue the extended period from May 30, 2010, to July 31, 2010.

**Welcome January
New Members**

**Frank Volante, EN Engineering
Barbara Whalen, ELCA**

Certification Corner

Over these past 10 years, I was completely happy with my PHR designation. (I was proud to display it on my name badge at conferences, and it appears on my business card and on my email signature). But during this year's goal development session with my manager, she passed down a goal requirement to earn my SPHR designation. Ugh! I could hear myself saying. Although I thought about taking the exam many times in the past, I just didn't have the ambition to take on another activity that would impose on my already full schedule and, most important, my personal downtime. I knew I wouldn't have the discipline to study on my own. Also, I didn't want to extend the class/study time out over a full 13-15 week period. So I opted for a local university fast-track program that covered one module every week (total of 6 Saturdays). Then I gave myself two additional weeks to utilize the on-line SHRM Learning System ... studying the flashcards and taking the practice exams until I knew the terms and exam answers by heart. I'm a terrible test taker, so I committed as much time as possible and utilized every tool available to me.

I went into the testing facility with the attitude, If I don't pass, it's not the end of the world ... I'll just buckle down and study some more to retake the exam. If only I can relax, concentrate on the question, look for those key words, think strategically, then I can do it... and if I can do it, so can you!

I believe the study materials and taking the review preparation course gave me the edge I needed to successfully pass the SPHR exam. This has increased my status with my manager, my employer/co-workers, my family and friends, and my volunteer colleagues (I even got a new title to boot ... hopefully, the merit increase will come this year). Personally, it has given me a true sense of accomplishment, and I can honestly say I love seeing it — there — with my name!

Carrie Gurski, SPHR

EMPLOYER RETALIATION CLAIMS ON THE RISE

By Gregory D. Stobbe, J.D., SPHR

On January 6, 2010, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) released its Charge Statistics for FY 2009 (ending September 30, 2009). A total of 93,277 total charges for all categories were filed. This represented the second highest number of total charges reported in history.

This data was arrayed by individual charge classification and illustrated the continuing increase in retaliation claims as a percentage of overall charges. However, of particular significance, is that the latest reported statistic for retaliation claims has now tied, as a percentage, the number of claims based upon race, both now at 36%. Charges predicated upon race have historically represented the highest single charge category filed with the EEOC. That said, for the past twelve reporting years, the percentage of race charges to overall charges has remained static, with a high of 37.3% (FY 1999) and a low of 34.9% (FY 2004). In contrast, retaliation claims have grown steadily from a low of 22.6% (FY 1997) to the latest reported data of 36%.

EEOC Acting Chairman, Stuart Ishimaru, stated, "The latest data tell us that, as the first decade of the 21st century comes to a close, the Commission's work is far from finished." Ishimaru went on to say "Equal employment opportunity remains elusive for far too many workers and the commission will continue to fight for their rights. Employers must step up their efforts to foster discrimination-free and inclusive workplaces, or risk enforcement and litigation by the EEOC."

The near-historic level of total discrimination charge filings may be due to multiple factors, including greater accessibility of the EEOC to the public, economic conditions, increased diversity and demographic shifts in the labor force, employees' greater awareness of their rights under the law, and changes to the agency's intake practices that cut down on the steps needed for an individual to file a charge, the EEOC stated.

Employers should also be aware that any employee action they take, such as a layoff, might in and of itself be appropriate, but could still result in a charge against them. This is occurring when an affected employee contends that the underlying reason for that action was based upon the employer's retaliation for a past action on that employee's part — for example, where an employee previously lodged a complaint with the employer (about some form of discrimination or harassment) and then contends this was the reason for the action taken. When an employee goes on record with this type of complaint with his/her employer, the employer must use care in any subsequent actions to understand if it may be potentially exposing itself to a retaliation charge. Stay tuned.

HRA members who have questions about employment law can call the HRA Legal Hotline, free of charge, to receive legal information from HRA's Legislative Director, Neil H. Dishman, or one of Neil's colleagues at Jackson Lewis LLP, a national firm representing management exclusively in workplace law.

To use the hotline, call (312) 787-4949 to be connected to the front desk at Jackson Lewis LLP, and state that you are calling for the HRA Hotline. The receptionist will take some basic information about you, your company, and your question, and then hang up with you. As soon as possible, Neil or one of his colleagues will call you back to discuss your question. In the vast majority of cases, someone will return your call on the same or next business day.

Please note that the HRA Hotline is for informational purposes only, and not for the purpose of obtaining legal advice. Calling the HRA Hotline does not create an attorney-client relationship between you and Jackson Lewis, and it is not a substitute for getting the advice of a retained attorney.



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 e-mail: hra@hraoakbrook.org



Since winning the 1995 Pinnacle Award, the Human Resource Association of Greater Oak Brook has been designated as a Superior Merit Chapter by the Society for Human Resource Management for years 1995 through 2008. We are well on our way to achieving this status for year 2009.

HRA is an affiliate of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), Local Chapter #212. HRA's student chapter affiliation is with Elmhurst College in Elmhurst, Illinois, and is known as the Elmhurst College Human Resource Association (ECHRA), SHRM Student Chapter #5472. HRA membership is \$100 per year with a \$10 discount for SHRM members.

Schedule of Events

Human Resource Association of Greater Oak Brook
 The Lodge Hyatt Hotel, McDonald's Campus, 2815 Jorie Blvd., Oak Brook

January 12, 2010
 Social Media for HR Professionals
 11:30 - 1:30

February 9, 2010
 Wellness in the Workplace
 7:30 - 9:30

March 9, 2010
 Legislative Update
 7:30 - 9:30

2010 Board of Directors

Inside the HRA

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 calendars now!



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Please send your
 newsletter submissions to:

Cheryl Schilling via email at
cheryl.schilling@lionsclubs.org
 by the 15th of every month