

High court takes gay rights case

Associated Press

The state Supreme Court said Wednesday it will take up a politically charged and complicated gay rights case.

The court said it will decide whether the city of Green Bay and other Wisconsin municipalities, including the town of Cottage Grove, can intervene in a lawsuit in which gay and lesbian state employees are seeking health insurance benefits for their partners.

State employees backed by the American Civil Liberties Union sued the state government in 2005 to obtain health insurance and sick leave benefits.

The municipalities have tried to intervene in the case, saying they could be forced to provide similar benefits for their employees if the state loses.

Republicans who controlled the Legislature until the fall election made a similar argument in trying to intervene.

But a state appeals court ruled in September that the Department of Justice was adequately representing the state's interests in the case.

The high court said Wednesday it would hear an appeal by the municipalities, but it turned down a similar request by the Legislature.



Headed home
■ Vince Calandrino of Fitchburg leaves the Lake Kegonsa ice at sunset after a day of fishing on Tuesday .

Minnesotan: Tuition pact unfair

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — Minnesota lawmakers might insert themselves into a dispute over a tuition reciprocity agreement that has some Wisconsin students paying less to attend Minnesota universities than their home-state classmates.

A House higher education panel heard testimony Wednesday on a proposal to raise Wisconsin students' tuition rates to Minnesota levels by fall 2008. Under the reciprocity pact, a Wisconsin student pays about \$2,000 less a year to at-

Lawmaker says Wisconsinites pay less

tend the University of Minnesota's Twin Cities campus.

"I'm just trying to have two kids sitting next to each other on the Twin Cities campus paying the same tuition," said Rep. Tom Huntley, DFL-Duluth, the bill's sponsor.

Talks between Minnesota and Wisconsin officials could make the bill moot, said Susan Heegaard, director of the state Office of Higher Education.

Heegaard said the goal was to keep the reciprocity agreement while improving the terms for Minnesota institutions.

A University of Minnesota official called the lower rates for Wisconsin students "ridiculous." Peter Zetterberg, a senior analyst in the provost's office, said the university doesn't want them to pay more than their Minnesota counterparts, just the same amount.

The committee didn't vote on Huntley's proposal, but will consider including it in a larger bill later this session.

UW research grants target reading, Ritalin

Associated Press

The University of Wisconsin-Madison awarded seed money to eight major research projects Wednesday as part of a program to build interest in its new research institutes.

The proposals will receive a total of \$3 million to tackle problems including detecting disease, producing human embryonic stem cells and improving reading among black children.

The research projects, selected from a pool that originally included 220 ideas, are designed to illustrate the interdisciplinary approach embodied by the Wisconsin Institutes for Discovery.

The \$150 million institutes are being built through a combination of private and state money. Scheduled for completion in 2010, they are designed to bring together scientists from a broad spectrum of disciplines to seek answers to major problems facing human health and welfare.

The university's grant competition was designed to stimulate interest in the institutes and help shape their research agenda.

"These seed grant projects essentially lay the groundwork for the research that will be housed there," said John Morgridge, a UW-Madison alum who donated \$50 million for

the state-of-the-art research center that will house two institutes.

The winning projects involve more than 60 faculty and staff researchers from 25 departments. They include:

■ A study that aims to develop early detection methods for polycystic ovary syndrome, a common hormonal disorder for women of reproductive age. Early detection can help reduce long-term complications.

■ A project seeking to better understand the brain's reaction to stimulant drugs such as Ritalin. The goal is to develop new, less risky treatments for attention-deficit disorder and other mental health conditions.

■ A study to develop a system for producing large batches of human embryonic stem cells and heart cells. Many experts believe the lack of production is an obstacle to using stem cells to find cures for disease and to develop new drugs.

■ An investigation into reading achievement in black children and how it relates to their early language experiences and brain functioning. Researchers aim to use neuroscience research to identify causes of the achievement gap between underprivileged children and other students.

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