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Governor Eliminates Department of Employment Relations

Move Will Eliminate 19 Positions, Save Taxpayers Over \$1 Million

As part of his effort to streamline and downsize state government, Governor Jim Doyle today announced the elimination of the Department of Employment Relations, effective August 24. This restructuring eliminates 19 full-time positions and saves the state over \$1,000,000 annually.

The duties will be transferred to the newly created Office of State Employment Relations, which will operate as an independent entity, attached to the Department of Administration. Karen Timberlake, who was appointed as the Secretary of the Department of Employment Relations by Doyle in December 2002, will serve as Director of the new office.

"When I came into office, job one was balancing our budget without raising taxes. Even though we have accomplished that task – a task many thought was impossible – we must continue our efforts to streamline government and ensure that taxpayer dollars are used efficiently," Governor Doyle said. "The transformation of DER into the Office of State Employment Relations is a good example of how state government can streamline operations and cut costs, while maintaining core services. This is about doing more with less, as I promised during the campaign."

This staff reduction was accomplished by utilizing existing staff and resources at the Department of Administration to provide administrative support to OSER in areas such as information technology, purchasing, and financial management.

OSER will oversee the state civil service system, negotiate state labor contracts, manage labor relations, and lead the state's affirmative action and equal opportunity employment programs.

Governor Doyle proposed eliminating the Department as part of his budget in February, and signed the proposal into law on July 24, 2003. Today's action implements that proposal.