

Eugene H. Rooney Award for Leadership in Human Resource Management

Nominee:

Mr. Samuel L. Wilkins, Esq.
State Human Resources Director
South Carolina

South Carolina Budget and Control Board
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1. Describe how the nominee has demonstrated leadership by participating on major state government committees, task forces and/or special projects related to state human resource management.

Mr. Wilkins is the South Carolina state government equivalent of the corporate head of human resources. As such, he is considered the expert and authority on issues relating to public service employment in this state, and is often called upon to participate where executive level human resource representation is required.

The highest level task force to which Mr. Wilkins has been assigned since his installment as State Human Resources Director was to the Governor's Management, Accountability and Performance (MAP) Committee. This committee, constituted by the incoming governor with private and public sector representatives, was charged with a total review of state government processes, with the committee to which Mr. Wilkins was assigned having responsibility for a complete review of South Carolina human resources. This understandably massive undertaking required a tremendous amount of research, current process explanation, data collection, and time on the part of Mr. Wilkins. In the end, his representation and participation was lauded by the committee. The recommendations made for human resources-related process improvements were made in a collegial manner, and reflected the inclusion of the input of a seasoned human resources professional.

In addition to this special assignment, Mr. Wilkins is a regular attendee at the state's Budget and Control Board meetings as the human resources representative, has participated in numerous process improvement and customer relations-type sessions with his agency constituents, and is an active participant in the state level International Personnel Management Association (IPMA), having served as its President. While President, he presided over, and served as the host for the IPMA Southern Region Conference, recognized as one of the best conferences in recent Southern Region IPMA history.

2. Describe how the nominee has demonstrated exceptional leadership in the field of human resources management beyond your state human resources organization.

Mr. Wilkins came to human resources from a legal perspective as the Senior Assistant Attorney General representative to the State Employee Grievance Process. As such, his credentials preceded him, and his transition into total immersion in the human resources profession was an easy one. As the acknowledged legal expert in the field of public sector employment in South Carolina and the author of numerous articles and publications regarding the subject, Mr. Wilkins' span of influence has always reached beyond the traditional boundaries of OHR. He was a source of information for state agency human resources organizations long before his employment at OHR, and he continues to provide those services. He has lent his considerable process improvement skills to numerous agency processes, and his participation with IPMA

and the Society of Human Resources Management (SHRM) have only served to increase the number of institutions and individuals that call upon him for assistance.

Additionally, as a representative of NASPE, Mr. Wilkins has been a frequent contributor to a number of efforts outside of South Carolina. Through NASPE, he has partnered with the National Association of State Health Officials (ASTHO) and the National Association of State Chief Information Officers (NASCIO) to coordinate efforts, and to ensure that the relevant topics of issues like workforce planning and projected employee demographics continue to get the attention that he believes they demand. He has also worked with the national representatives of IPMA to assist in the determination of the agenda for their international conference.

3. Describe how the nominee's leadership and/or management skills in implementing human resources management programs.

The leadership of process improvements is one of Mr. Wilkins' specialties. After a short stint as the general counsel for OHR, a management transition resulted in his assignment to the assistant director level. One of his assigned responsibilities was the Interagency Merit System, a system that was a holdover from the days where employee merit selection and applicant registers were a requirement of the federal government for all grant-in-aid agencies. As the laws had been changed which required rigid processes to satisfy these requirements, Mr. Wilkins immediately began a process to renovate the processes to better fit the environment needed in South Carolina. He facilitated customer input sessions, developed a number of proposals, devoted considerable staff time, and, in the end, developed a system that worked for South Carolina. His recommendations even included a physical re-design of the work space which housed the previous function. His efforts led to numerous recognitions, including a Rooney Award.

Mr. Wilkins then began a process to improve the rules and regulations governing human resources in South Carolina state government. He led a process that included a complete review of the entire body of regulations, reviewing them literally "word by word," with a goal towards making them more understandable, more logically compiled, and more relevant. This process, one which spanned two full years, resulted in the regulations that were eventually approved by the Budget and Control Board and are in place today.

Mr. Wilkins then turned his efforts towards the human resources development (HRD) processes of OHR. He led a process whereby the training related offerings of OHR became more focused towards our stated mission, eliminating non-related courses, and concentrating on those courses that contributed to the furtherance of the professionalism of human resources in the state. This improvement process resulted in a much more concentrated effort on the part of the OHR staff, allowed HRD to function with less staff than was previously required, and resulted in a function for which resources and projected revenue was much easier to determine.

His HRD efforts also resulted in a complete overhaul of the state's Certified Public Manager (CPM) program offering. Under Mr. Wilkins' leadership, this program was changed from an "open enrollment"-based employee driven process, to one which required a specific time and financial commitment on the part of the participant's employing agency. The CPM program was also changed to a "cohort" program, one in which a set of individuals proceeds through the class offering as a group, resulting in an associated set of individuals credentialed and "bonded" by the same experiences. This redesigned program is also one that has been nationally recognized.

4. Describe how the nominee has demonstrated leadership within the NASPE organization in support of NASPE's mission to share information on human resources issues so that members can better achieve their state's mission and business objectives. Include evidence of local or national acclaim in the field and influence on other state's personnel executives.

Mr. Wilkins was an active participant in NASPE before his appointment as State Human Resources Director. He had attended three conferences prior to his appointment, and had already participated on task forces for NASPE. Upon his appointment as Director, he immediately formalized his participation with appointments to task forces and committees, and quickly rose to the position of NASPE President. As President-Elect, he chaired the program committee that determined the direction of that year's annual conference, and demonstrated his leadership by directing the organization towards the relevant topics that were critical for that year and beyond. His tenure as President has been marked by the partnerships noted above, as he has been called upon by numerous organizations from CSG to ASTHO to lend his considerable expertise to their efforts.

Mr. Wilkins' leadership of the human resources function in South Carolina resulted in the third consecutive "A" rating by Governing Magazine earlier this year. As such, South Carolina has been determined to be a national public sector human resources leader. Because of this recognition, Mr. Wilkins is constantly called upon to provide documentation on OHR's practices and procedures, which he has graciously provided to all requestors. His NASPE presidency has only served to make OHR's leadership more prevalent, and his active participation on NASPE taskforces and committee allows him to provide working examples of excellent products from his own state.

5. Describe any relevant state human resources program or initiatives that were successful because of the nominee's involvement.

South Carolina's workforce planning efforts have been recognized as some of the best in the nation, but Mr. Wilkins saw an additional need within that effort that required attention. Although OHR's role in workforce planning has primarily been one of information and best practice sharing, training, and leadership, a specific workforce planning finding presented an opportunity for demonstration. The human resources profession within South Carolina state government is typical of many of the

professions, with many seasoned individuals nearing retirement eligibility, but without a recognized set of potential replacements. Mr. Wilkins determined that OHR could demonstrate some of the principles of workforce planning by developing a process by which a cadre of professional could be readied to replace our retiring HR professionals. This program, the Human Resources Professional Development (HRPD) program, was implemented during the second year of Mr. Wilkins' tenure as State Director, and is being used a model for other professions that may require the same type of attention.

Many of his other leadership activities have already been documented in previous paragraphs of this document, and do not need to be repeated here. Suffice it to say that Mr. Wilkins is a leader, both internal and external to his organization. His willingness to take on tough initiatives and see them through to a successful completion is a primary reason for OHR's success and for his reputation as a leader in the human resources profession.