

Analysis of Suggestions for Improvement as part of the FY 2010 County's Line of Business & Schools Program Review Processes Fall 2008

Request By: Employee

Suggestion: Consider using floating holidays for employees in place of some regular holidays. Certain holidays (e.g., Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Presidents' Day, Columbus Day, Veterans' Day, and the day after Thanksgiving) could be made regular workdays while employees are permitted an equal number of "floating holidays" -- days they could take off with pay under the same conditions as regular leave. The advantage to the County is that no holiday overtime would be paid for those who work on the days that had been holidays but would now be regular workdays.

Response By: Department of Human Resources

Background: In essence, the suggestion is to decrease the number of paid holidays and simultaneously increase the amount of annual leave an employee earns each year by an equal number of hours. For example, using the number of holidays mentioned in the suggestion, a full-time merit employee would have 5 fewer holidays each year and take 40 more hours of annual leave. This is a variation of "paid time off," whereby employees are not granted annual leave and/or sick leave specifically, but are given a certain amount of paid leave that may be used for any purpose.

Recommendation:

The Department of Human Resources does not recommend adoption of this suggestion, for several reasons:

- For the most part, County holidays correspond to federal, state and school holidays. It is very likely that many employees would want to take the official holidays off to spend with their family, especially if they have children off from school. Managers might find it particularly challenging to staff their offices on a "regular work day" in Fairfax that is a holiday for many other organizations.
- The intent of many of the holidays currently on the calendar was to provide employees an opportunity to attend holiday observances held on the designated days (e. g., Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and Veterans' Day ceremonies). Substituting an equivalent number of annual leave hours would not convey the Board of Supervisor's intent to honor the event being recognized with a paid holiday. This is a policy issue that could be addressed by the Board at a future date.
- The significant increase in annual leave earned by employees each year would have an adverse fiscal impact in terms of the County's requirement to fund its leave liability per GASB.
- Cutting back on holiday hours would have minimal fiscal impact for most County employees, since they do not work on holidays. It would dramatically affect the overtime pay of public safety workers and others required to staff a function 24-7. The employee groups representing public safety employees may not support a

reduction in the additional pay they earn when working on an actual or observed holiday.

- A newly-hired full-time merit employee earns 104 hours (13 days) of annual leave a year. Employees with fewer than 10 years of service may carry over 240 hours of annual leave from one fiscal year to another. Increasing the amount of annual leave an employee earns in a year without increasing the amount that can be carried over might have the unintended consequence of increasing the number of employees who “lose” annual leave (i.e., have it converted to sick leave) as part of the leave cutback process.
- It is accurate that there would be savings associated with the elimination of fixed holidays in that there would be no requirement for extra pay for the employees scheduled to work that day (e.g. Police Officers). Additionally, County offices would be open additional days providing greater service to residents. It is difficult to assess the level of “business” that might be conducted on those days that are designated as holidays by many other organizations.

NOTE: Implementation of this suggestion would require Board of Supervisor approval of amendments to the Personnel Regulations.