

TAHRA  
P.O. BOX 1656  
TRAVERSE CITY, MI

DATES AND EVENTS  
TO REMEMBER

JANUARY 9,  
2007

EXECUTIVE  
AND INTER-  
NAL COACH-  
ING

12:00—2:00 PM

WATERFRONT  
CONFERENCE  
CENTER

FEBRUARY  
13, 2007

LEGAL  
ROUNDTABLE

12:00—2:00 PM

WATERFRONT  
CONFERENCE  
CENTER

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# TAHRA

Traverse Area Human Resource Association

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 3

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2007

## The President's Corner

### Greetings from Your President:

**Comfort Zones** – we all have them. They are a wonderful place to be when things get rough and crazy, especially during trying times in our lives.

Here is the definition of Comfort Zone from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia:

***Comfort Zone** is the term used to denote a type of [mental conditioning](#) resulting in artificially created mental boundaries, within which an individual derives a sense of security. These boundaries tend to result in an internal state of mind, an example of which would be rigid attitudes and beliefs, which may not necessarily be true. This may or may not manifest as an external situation in the individual's life.*

Kathryn Carmichael pushed right through her comfort zone during our December program, as she shared her experience as a participant in the Bridge Program. Kathryn shared her fear of speaking in front of such a large group, as she stepped up to tell her story. You would never have known this fear existed based upon her speaking ability - she did a great job. Knowing she was going to be out of her comfort zone Kathryn prepared herself to speak. She had clearly rehearsed what she was going to say and how she was going to say it. This preparation paid off and she



did a tremendous job. As we heard from our guest speakers, for some people, problems, suffering, poverty, bad breaks are their comfort zone. Try to take away these problems and they will fight back. They find comfort in finding fault and complaining about their misfortune. The same is true for businesses. Daily crisis, employees making bad decisions, accidents, trivial problems, confrontation between management and workers is a workforce comfort zone. Management and workers have grown accustomed to seeing things go wrong and expect them to. Management finds comfort in finding fault with workers and workers find comfort in finding fault with management. I think we are all likely to relate to this! It is always helpful to have reminders of how we can be open to the needs of those who are pushing up against comfort zones and support them personally which ultimately supports the needs of an organization. Extending the concept of comfort zones into the TAHRA community, I think about some

of us who have been around TAHRA for a while and may go into a comfort zone when we attend monthly meetings. We may find we often sit with the same individuals every month, those we know and are comfortable with. While we may feel this is the only time we get to see these particular colleagues, and appreciate this networking time, it is also important to reach out and extend ourselves to those we don't know. With eleven new TAHRA members, I would like to challenge each of our seasoned members to seek out these new members, and invite them to sit with you and introduce them to your colleagues. Include them in your discussions and networking. Help them break through their discomfort of being 'new'.

I would like to share a thought about comfort zones as we begin the New Year. *Negative comfort zones can be overcome by thinking about and setting positive goals. Taking this one step further, using visualization is extremely powerful to push through a comfort zone, reaching and stretching to take on that next difficult challenge. What we think about, visualize and what we expect for ourselves, be it positive or negative, is ultimately our comfort zone.*

[Karen.schultz@prioritysolutions.com](mailto:Karen.schultz@prioritysolutions.com) 231-947-4430 x 3089

— Karen Schultz, President

## Spring 2007 HRCI Study Group

### Attention TAHRA members:

A certification study group is being formed to assist you in gaining the knowledge you need to pass the certification exam for the PHR, SPHR, or GHR. If you would like to find out more about joining the study group, or for more information about how you can become certified through the HRCI Certification program, call Lori Hodek at 995-1143 or email [lhodek@nmc.edu](mailto:lhodek@nmc.edu).

### This year's testing window for spring 2007 is listed below:

PHR and SPHR – May 1, 2007 – June 30, 2007

GHR – May 1, 2007 – May 31, 2007

### Application deadlines for all levels:

Regular deadline – March 16, 2007

Late deadline – April 20, 2007

Remember, TAHRA offers a \$200 scholarship for those who qualify. Scholarship applications are available on the TAHRA website by going to [www.tahratc.org](http://www.tahratc.org) and logging into members and clicking on addendums.



## New TAHRA Members

Christina Gray—TC Days Inn & Suites

Current TAHRA membership is 68 members; 11 new members for 2006-2007 year to date.

Language is the expression of thought. Every time you speak, your mind is on parade.

AFFILIATE OF



SOCIETY FOR  
HUMAN  
RESOURCE  
MANAGEMENT

## SHRM Governmental Affairs Election Overview 2006

The 2006 elections had a profound impact on the makeup of the state legislatures and governorships. Prior to the November 7th elections, Republicans held 28 governorships while their Democratic counterparts held 22. Beginning next year, that ratio will be reversed, with Democrats holding 28 governorships and Republicans 22, having lost control of the governorships in New York, Massachusetts, Arkansas, Ohio Colorado, and Maryland where incumbent Governor Robert Ehrlich (R) lost a close reelection bid to Baltimore Mayor Martin O'Malley (D) .

Which party controls the majority in state legislatures can significantly affect the type of legislation that is introduced and the priority given to various issues. Prior to the 2006 elections, Republicans had control of both chambers in 20 state legislatures with 19 controlled by the Democrats. Ten legislatures were equally divided, with each party controlling one of the chambers in their respective legislature. The Nebraska legislature, unlike those of the other 49 states, operates as a non-partisan Unicameral.

Beginning in 2007, the breakdown of party control of the state legislatures also will change in favor of the Democrats. On Election Day 2006, Democrats captured majorities in 11 chambers previously controlled by Republicans and wrestled away both houses in the New Hampshire and Iowa state legislatures from GOP control. While the final outcome of the 2006 election is yet to be determined on the Montana and Washington state legislatures, Democrats have gained control of both chambers in 22 states, Republicans in 16, while party control remains equally divided in nine states.

**2007 Policy Agenda in the States** With the Democrats' strong showing at the polls at the state level, HR professionals can expect state legislatures to continue to grapple with public policy issues that, for the most part, have remained stalled in the halls of the United States Congress. It is anticipated that 2007 - 2008 will be active years on the state level for such HR public policy issues as health care reform, immigration reform, paid family leave, paperless payroll measures and workplace safety legislation.

**Health Care Reform:** In 2006, hundreds of bills were introduced in state legislatures across the country designed primarily to increase health care coverage for the uninsured. These approaches varied from legislation mandating that large employers (10,000 or more workers in the state) spend up to 8 percent of their payroll costs to provide health care for their employees, to a comprehensive health care reform measure adopted in Massachusetts. The Massachusetts law requires all state residents who can afford it to buy insurance, as well as mandates that most Massachusetts employers who fail to provide a certain level of health care coverage to their employees pay \$295 per employee, per year into a state-run fund used to offset the cost of providing care to the uninsured poor.

**Outlook:** Health care reform legislation is certain to be a hotly contested issue again in 2007 - 2008. All eyes will be on Massachusetts to determine if its program, which becomes effective in July 2007, shows signs of success. If the program is perceived to be successful, we expect other states (particularly those in the Northeast such as Rhode Island, in the West, and in any other state where a Democratic governor will be presiding over a Democratic-controlled legislature) to consider enacting hybrids of the Massachusetts health care reform plan as early as the spring of 2007.

## SHRM Governmental Affairs Election Overview 2006...

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**Immigration Reform:** As witnessed by the huge number of immigration reform-related bills (nearly 550) that arose on the state level in 2006, state legislatures appear to have given up hope that Congress will soon act on comprehensive reform. In 2006, 78 pieces of legislation were enacted on the state level relating to immigration reform. Some restrict illegal aliens from receiving state benefits while others require contractors doing business with a state government to participate in the Basic Pilot Program - currently a voluntary electronic employment eligibility program administered by the U.S. Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), the use of which would be mandated under the comprehensive immigration reform bills currently before the U.S. Congress.

**Outlook:** The results of the 2006 elections are not expected to have much of an impact on immigration reform activity on the state level in 2007, particularly if the issue remains deadlocked in the U.S. Congress. Immigration reform is likely to continue to be debated across the country (particularly in border states), focusing on efforts to restrict illegal aliens from receiving state benefits, increasing fines for hiring illegal aliens, and limiting the awarding of state contracts to those companies that participate in the Basic Pilot Program and who certify that their workforce is free of illegal workers.

**Minimum Wage:** The current federal minimum wage has been \$5.15 since 1997. In 2006, 33 states and Puerto Rico considered bills to raise their state minimum wage. To date, 23 states and the District of Columbia have adopted minimum wages that are higher than the federal minimum wage. Most bills propose to increase the general minimum wage rates while others restrict the increase to certain occupational categories or seek to impose penalties for violations of minimum wage laws. Twelve states have considered legislation that would link future minimum wage hikes with the cost-of-living index.

**Outlook:** As a result of state Democratic gains in the 2006 elections, the minimum wage is certain to remain a hot-button issue on the state level, particularly if Congress does not increase the minimum wage rate early in 2007.

**Paid Leave/Family Leave:** The issues of paid and family leave have been under debate at the state level for several years. California paved the way in 2003 with passage of the country's most comprehensive paid family and medical leave insurance program. This program affords employees up to 50 weeks of leave a year to recover from a serious illness or medical condition, including pregnancy- or birth-related disability, and is principally employee funded. Although other states have not been successful in enacting similar measures, legislatures have considered 19 similar bills and 38 job protection bills in the 2006 legislative sessions.

**Outlook:** The political climate has not been generally conducive to an employer paid leave model, but with Democratic gains in some state houses and governor seats, it is possible that an employee-paid leave model, similar to that of California, will gain traction. It is even more likely that states will continue to offer job protection, in lieu of a paid leave provision. These job protection provisions are likely to take the form of time off for voting, child-related responsibilities and military service.

**Paperless Payroll:** In 2006, a variety of state legislatures entertained some innovative bills aimed at increasing the use of technology in both the government and private sectors. In Kansas and Virginia specifically, paperless payroll legislation was a hot topic. Paperless payroll would give employers the discretion to pay wages to employees in cash, with a check, by direct deposit, or if they chose to do so, through electronic payment using a reusable payroll card. A reusable payroll card would function similar to a "live check," where the total balance of an employee's wages would be available for use by the employee.

**Outlook:** This issue continues to enjoy bipartisan support. Both parties are considering ways to improve efficiency and access to technology for both employers and employees.

**Reference Checking:** Over the past decade, a handful of highly publicized national and state defamation and negligent hiring cases stemming from the hiring process dictate that employers adopt non-disclosure policies to protect themselves from liability. As a result, many employers across the nation are unable to obtain reliable, complete and accurate job performance information on prospective employees. This situation impedes an employer's ability to gather all pertinent and useful information in reference to a prospective employee. Because of the threat of a lawsuit, an employer may only consider limited information, such as name, position held, compensation and dates of employment, in the hiring process. For these reasons, 33 states have passed reference-checking legislation, and the issue is under consideration in several other states.

**Outlook:** As an employer friendly initiative, reference checking typically garners support from both Republicans and Democrats within state legislatures. Although a new political climate may emerge from the 2006 elections, many states that do not have reference checking protections may choose to enact them in 2007 - 2008.

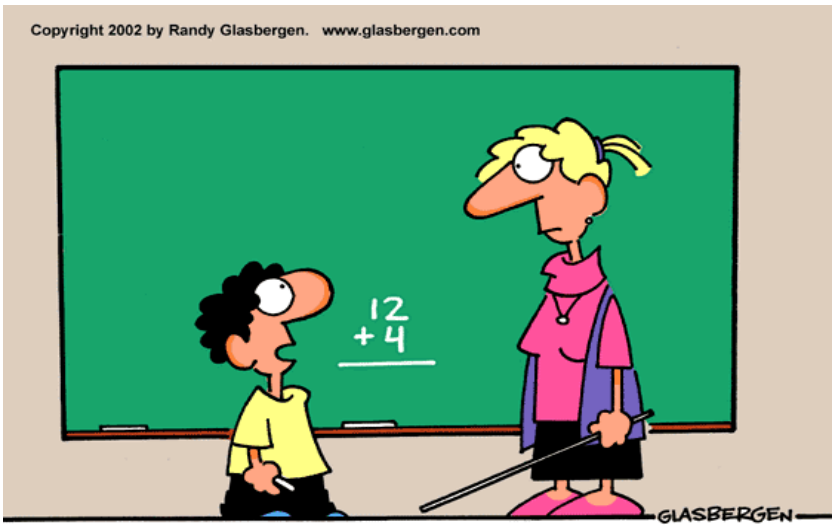
## 5 Ways to Make Work Fun

### Activate Your Workforce with these Creative Ideas

When you walk in the door to work each morning, chances are, you already know basically what you will be doing the rest of the day. For most everyone, work is fairly consistent from day to day, and even the type of variety that may come up is fairly predictable. But whether you sit at a desk or oversee an assembly line, you probably enjoy a break from the routine. The same is true for your employees. Activities that allow people to break away from the norm are a great way to build teams. Check out these ideas on how to infuse some life into your workforce.



- **Mystery Employee** – Create a questionnaire for each of your employees asking for little-known facts that will be difficult for co-workers to guess, such as childhood hobbies, least-favorite color, guilty-pleasure television shows or their middle name. Type a short paragraph on each employee's answers to distribute to everyone and see who can guess the correct co-worker for each. You can use the mystery cards all at once and deem the person with the most correct guesses the winner. Or, if you play periodically until everyone's been featured, put all those who guess correctly into a drawing for a prize. Consider letting the winner off an hour early as their reward. This game is a great way to encourage team members to get to know one another and can be a nice break from the daily grind.
  - **Soup's On** – Have a company- or department-wide potluck lunch. Coordinate the meal so that each work group or team is responsible for one portion, such as vegetables, breads, entrees, salads, desserts and drinks. Try a spin on this idea and make your potluck into a cook-off. Have participants vote on the best dish in each category and give ribbons or prizes to the winners. This activity can bring your group together and provide a fun break in the middle of the day.
  - **Out of Office Experience** – Try moving your staff meeting or planning retreat out of the office for a breath of fresh air. A local restaurant or activity center may be the perfect spot. For a less expensive alternative, consider taking your team to your home for a time of planning in a relaxed environment. Then, when the work is done, save some time to play. Sometimes, simply changing your setting can boost productivity and morale.
  - **Family Day** – Designate an afternoon for your employees to invite their families to work. This could come in the form of a holiday party or company picnic, but keep in mind that no matter how large or small your workforce, your employees will appreciate being able to share about their jobs with those they love.
  - **Lunch Tournament** – Bring board games, cards, checkers or chess boards for a lunch-time game tournament. Provide food and drinks to employees who participate and extend lunch by an extra hour. You can create brackets or team names and designate prizes for the winners, such as a traveling trophy or a day off from work. To maximize team building, pair up people who don't normally work together. This fun and simple activity offers a break from the routine and will energize your employees.
- Try using these ideas this week to liven up things in your workplace. You will find that your efforts are appreciated by your employees as they get to know one another better and enjoy a break from the routine.



**“Do I get partial credit for simply having the courage to get out of bed and face the world again today?”**

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**Traverse City, MI 49685-1656**

Newsletter Articles  
 The TAHRA Newsletter is a bi-monthly publication. Members interested in submitting articles for the newsletter or for press releases should contact Laura Mitchell at lamitchell@waynewire.com . Deadlines for submission are the 10th day of the month. TAHRA encourages its members to submit articles, information, or successes they've had that they feel others may find interesting. TAHRA reserves the right to alter submissions for space purposes. If you would like to be removed from the newsletter mailing list, please let us know.

**2006-2007 TAHRA Leadership Board**

- |                              |                     |
|------------------------------|---------------------|
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