

2022 NASPEs AWARD

Eugene H. Rooney, Jr. Award Nomination Leadership in State Human Resource Management

Nominations from dues-paying states are considered for eligibility. Nominated leaders and programs should have a positive effect on the administration of state human resource programs. A state's central human resource department or line agency human resource operations may administer nominated programs.

Programs and projects must have been operational for at least six months and must be transferable to other states. Selection criteria are based on the questions asked on the award application. Included in this packet are the specific criteria for each award and their categories. Nominations are encouraged in all areas of human resource management administration.

NOMINEE INFORMATION

Nominee: Byron P. Decoteau, Jr.

Title: State Civil Service Director

State: LA

Agency: Louisiana State Civil Service

Telephone: (225) 342-8272

E-mail: Byron.decoteau@la.gov

Brief Biography of Nominee (One paragraph, please):

Byron Decoteau Jr. currently serves as the Director of the Louisiana Department of State Civil Service. As director, he is responsible for administering a comprehensive merit-based personnel management program that is founded upon the principles of equal pay for equal work, equal opportunity, ability based employment and promotion, and freedom from political influence. Prior to his tenure at State Civil Service, Byron began his career in state government human resources with the Department of Public Safety and Corrections – Corrections Services. During his ten years with Corrections, he served in various HR roles before ultimately assuming the role as HR Director. In 2010, he joined the Department of State Civil Service as the HR Administrator over the MIS Division. He subsequently served as the head of Compensation Division and State Civil Service Deputy Director before his appointment in December of 2015 to Director.

Byron holds a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Southeastern Louisiana and a Master's of Science in Human Resource Education from Louisiana State University. He currently maintains a Professional in Human Resources Certification from the HR Certification Institute and SHRM Certified Professional designation from the Society of Human Resources Management. He is a member of various professional HR organizations and currently serves on the Executive Board of the National Association of State Personnel Executives.

NOMINATOR INFORMATION

Nominator: Chris D. Deer

Title: State Civil Service Deputy Director

State: LA

Agency: Louisiana State Civil Service

Telephone: (225) 342-8272

E-mail: chris.deer@la.gov

ALL SUBMISSIONS MUST:

- Meet all eligibility requirements
- Meet deadline requirements
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DETAILS

- 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.**

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

Byron currently maintains a Professional in Human Resources Certification from the HR Certification Institute and SHRM Certified Professional designation from the Society of Human Resources Management. He was recently elected by his peers to the Board of Trustees for the Louisiana State Employees Retirement System. He also serves as an At-Large Board member of the Retired State Employees Association. Byron is an active participant in the Louisiana Civil Service League, helping to uphold the merit system throughout Louisiana. Not only is Byron a member of various professional HR organizations, he also encourages the staff of State Civil Service to enhance their reach through membership and participation in various local, state, and national organizations, such as IPMA-HR, SHRM, World at Work, and the Association for Talent Development.

- 3. Describe the nominee's leadership and/or management skills in implementing human resource management programs.**

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Byron's leadership style can best be described as a builder. Great leaders build amazing communities. They do so in a variety of ways and over an extended period. Effective leaders share stories about what great leadership looks and feels like when individuals come together as teams, and teams come together as communities, with a unifying sense of purpose and collective ambition. Constant and clear communication represents another pillar of Byron's leadership abilities. Responding rapidly and in constant communication with all key stakeholders, Byron led efforts to revise Civil Service Rules responsive to the pandemic to ensure that paid leave was available to the state's classified employees consistent with rapidly changing federal law and responsive to the needs of thousands of employees impacted personally by illness and school and daycare closures. The rules adopted not only addressed the emergent circumstances but also were written with the foresight to address current measures being considered by the legislature to address family leave statewide. The revised leave rules also took into consideration the fiscal impact to the state of unprecedented leave needs by phasing certain measures out over time as federal requirements expired and employees had the time to make appropriate adjustments to take care of children and family members while returning to work. Through anticipation and vision, Byron was able to recognize the need for consistent rules and policies surrounding the new telework reality that had become so prevalent in the state workforce. Again, Byron led the effort to amend the Civil Service Rules to include allowing telework, both formal and situational. Not only did a Rule allowing telework facilitate the continuation of work during the many absences necessitated by the pandemic, it has proven to be a powerful "tool in the toolbox" for addressing historic recruitment and retention issues. Recognizing that not all jobs nor all employees are suited for telework, the Rule allows agencies to opt-in to a telework program with appropriate policies and periodic check-ins to ensure that the program adopted by the agency continues to satisfy agency needs and the taxpayers continue to receive the services they expect from state government agencies.

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4. Describe how the nominee has demonstrated leadership within the NASPE organization in support of NASPE's mission to share information on human resource 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 states' personnel executives.

Byron is a long-time, active member of the NASPE Executive Committee, and previously served the association as President. In 2018, NASPE awarded Byron with the Oscar B. Jackson, Jr. award for his contributions and support. Under his leadership at the agency level, Louisiana State Civil Service has been the recipient of many NASPE Awards, along with the 2019 IPMA-HR Large Agency Award of Excellence for exemplary contributions in Human Resources Management.

5. Describe any relevant state human resource management programs or initiatives that were successful because of the nominee's involvement.

Byron's leadership style and tenacity were paramount to one of the largest initiatives ever undertaken by State Civil Service. In 2018, Byron directed the charge in rolling out a re-vamped and updated compensation system for classified state employees in Louisiana. Faced with years of frozen salaries and stagnant pay ranges, Byron directed the initiative that would fundamentally change how state employees would be compensated moving forward. Our compensation system at the time featured pay structures, which drastically lagged behind the relevant labor market, non-competitive minimum salaries, and a 4% annual increase, which often went unfunded and lacked a clearly defined return on investment for state agencies and taxpayers. We had not adjusted our pay schedules to reflect changes in our relevant labor market since 2007. The gap between median salaries in the public and private sector and the median salaries of classified state employees in benchmarked job titles continued to expand. This market lag made attracting top candidates to classified job titles increasingly difficult. Large portions of classified employees' pay remained stagnant due to annual increases being suspended or withheld. This lack of pay progression towards a market competitive rate made retention of classified employees increasingly difficult. Byron ultimately took the leadership role in proposing to make a better investment in Louisiana. He proposed a new investment, which would represent a fundamental shift in the way we attract, pay, and retain classified

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employees. As Director of the state's merit system, Byron understood a pay structure realigned with our relevant labor market would ensure our state's ability to attract, train and retain a competent, engaged, and productive workforce proficient in providing the services to our citizens as mandated by various constitutional and legislative requirements. Annual pay increases would no longer be determined by an arbitrary, static number, but rather by prevailing market conditions. As a result of these efforts, and through Byron's leadership, our pay structures were realigned with the prevailing labor market, and state employees have enjoyed four consecutive years of annual pay increases commensurate with their respective relation to market. Byron's leadership has been on clear display throughout his entire career, but perhaps never as pronounced as the first half of 2022. Byron has taken a leadership role in recommending increases to pay rates for jobs within state government that have been put at risk by the changes in today's job market. Coming out of the pandemic, vacancies in state government have been at an all-time high. Job openings are up and job applicants are down. Under Byron's guidance and leadership, Louisiana State Civil Service has partnered with state agencies to address these concerns by conducting numerous job analysis, compensation studies, and targeted efforts to increase salaries of some of our most vulnerable and high turnover occupations. Through his role with the State Civil Service Commission, Byron has been successful in raising starting salaries for Correctional Officers, Child Welfare Workers, Nurses, Social Service Analysts, and Juvenile Justice Specialist among others. Balancing the demands of today's public sector job market with the restraints of operating in tax-payer funded environment, Byron has successfully engaged stakeholders from the legislature to the Governor's cabinet in crafting a way forward. Byron would be the first to tell you we have a long way to go and to give his staff all the credit for our gains thus far, however, without Byron's determination, adaptability, and leadership our successes to date would not have been possible.

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Office of the Commissioner
State of Louisiana
Division of Administration

JOHN BEL EDWARDS
GOVERNOR



JAY DARDENNE
COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATION

May 13, 2022

To the NASPE Award Nominating Committee:

It is my pleasure to endorse the nomination of Byron P. Decoteau, Jr. for the 2022 NASPE Eugene H. Rooney, Jr. Award for leadership in state human resource management.

Louisiana has twenty major executive branch agencies in addition to its universities, housing authorities, ports, flood protection authorities and many other agencies. Since Louisiana does not have a centralized human resources office, each agency's appointing authorities make decisions regarding agency operations using Civil Service Rules and guidance from the Division of Administration as parameters within which to work. More consistency with respect to agency pay and leave practices has been desired for many years, but never has it been more crucial than during the last few years in the face of not only the pandemic but the multiple, devastating natural disasters Louisiana has faced. Since consistency is not required by law, the only way to align agency policies in the most crucial areas is to get buy-in from agency appointing authorities.

Byron has been able to give State Civil Service a voice through a proactive, transparent and collaborative approach to leadership. Byron realizes that alone, State Civil Service is limited in its ability to effect change. At the same time, he realizes that as part of a team, much can be accomplished. His success can be measured by:

- Revisions to Chapter 11 of the Civil Service Rules adopted responsive to the pandemic to ensure that paid leave was available to the state's classified employees consistent with rapidly changing federal law and responsive to the needs of thousands of employees impacted personally by illness and school and daycare closures. The rules adopted not only addressed the emergent circumstances but were written with the foresight to address current measures being considered by the legislature to address family leave statewide. The revised leave rules also took into consideration the fiscal impact to the state of unprecedented leave needs by phasing certain measures out over time as federal requirements expired and employees had the time to make appropriate adjustments to take care of children and family members while returning to work.
- Revision of Chapter 11 of the Civil Service Rules to include Rule 11.4.1 allowing telework, both formal and situational. Not only did a Rule allowing telework facilitate the continuation of work during the many absences necessitated by the pandemic, it has proven to be a powerful "tool in the toolbox" for addressing unprecedented recruitment

and retention issues. Recognizing that not all jobs nor all employees are suited for telework, the Rule allows agencies to opt-in to a telework program with appropriate policies and periodic check-ins to ensure that the program adopted by the agency continues to satisfy agency needs and the taxpayers continue to receive the services they expect from state government agencies.

- In 2018, the way Louisiana paid its classified employees changed dramatically through adoption of the market-based compensation redesign program. While compensation redesign has proven a success, changes in today's job market have necessitated still further change. Vacancies in state government have been at an all-time high, with problems at both the recruitment and retention levels. Particularly problematic have been vacancies among correctional officers, nurses and child welfare workers. State Civil Service has partnered with the Division of Administration and state agency leadership to increase salaries in these occupations, which are crucial to public safety and welfare.

Success in the areas mentioned above would not have been possible had Byron not recognized the need to bring the stakeholders together by understanding agency needs, identifying how those needs can align with goals and expectations of Louisiana's executive leadership and showing the benefit of the legislature providing the necessary resources.

Communication has been key in these initiatives. Byron proactively engages the Division of Administration in discussions regarding agency needs and available resources. He addresses agency leadership at monthly Undersecretary's meetings. He reaches out to legislators. He has leveraged technology to bring the State Civil Service meetings outside the confines of the Louisiana Purchase Room by broadcasting them statewide so that classified employees and agency leadership alike can see what the State Civil Service Commission does and how the needs of agencies and the classified workforce are constantly being identified and addressed.

Finally, Byron and his team are never complacent. There is a constant effort to identify what they term "their why". State Civil Service is in a unique position to effect change and Byron and his team are constantly researching, attending conferences and communicating with leadership in both the public and private sectors across the country to identify trends and best practices and give them effect in Louisiana. Additionally, along with being active NASPE members, Byron and his staff hold leadership positions on the state employee's retirement system board, IPMA, SHRM and other human resources organizations.

Byron is well deserving of the Eugene H. Rooney, Jr. Award.

Sincerely,



Mark E. Falcon
Special Counsel
Division of Administration