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TO: KANSAS STATE EMPLOYEE COMPENSATION OVERSIGHT  
COMMISSION

FROM: FRED D. DEBES

SUBJECT: COMMENTS ON THE PROPOSED 2008 PAY PLAN

DATE: October 15, 2007

Ms. Clausing, Human Resources Director, has been asked to present the views of the Kansas Department of Corrections reference the proposed pay plan. Although employees were asked to comment and pose questions, I have yet to speak with any employee who has personally discussed their views with Ms. Clausing. The questions I posed were not answered.

I have been employed with the State of Kansas, Department of Corrections, since 1990. When hired, I was told that a matrix of pay grades and steps would be utilized on a yearly basis for salary enhancement. I did receive step increases until the year 2000, when salaries were frozen. The proposed pay plan appears to have a similar matrix. I find no merit in developing another plan that has been disregarded in the past.

What has occurred, is that some Kansas employee positions have been overlooked, while others have been enhanced. As an example - Parole Officers have not had a substantial pay raise, cost of living adjustment, or a step enhancement since 2000, while Kansas Highway Patrol Officers have increased salaries over thirty percent in the same time period. The position of Corrections Officer was upgraded several years ago. I contacted Human Resources and was told the reason for this upgrade was "difficulty in retention". When I pointed to a similar turnover rate for Parole Officers, I was told Human Resources had no such knowledge. It would again appear Parole Officer positions were overlooked.

In 2005, a group of Parole Officers began a process of investigating such discrepancies. We learned that the Parole Officer position was not recognized by KAPE, the then-sanctioned State of Kansas representative group. KAPE officials did not know Parole Officers were under their umbrella organization, and had not sought enhancements for that position for over thirteen years. The Public Employee Relations Board had to educate KAPE that they were supposed to represent Parole Officers.

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Since that time Parole Officers from across the State of Kansas have formed Lodge #64 of the Fraternal Order of Police. This organization has sought recognition of Parole Officers as law enforcement entities as State Statute declares, and to be recognized for the service they perform for the citizens of Kansas, the Department of Corrections, and the State of Kansas. The goal of this group of employees is to seek fair treatment, recognition of our efforts, and enhanced benefits for a job that has long been overlooked.

I object to a "merit-based" pay plan. The utilization of such a plan serves only to continue a practice that has proven ineffective and biased. The lack of pay enhancement, and the unfair evaluation process itself has created a hostile work environment within Parole Services.

Employees who are absent for weeks or months at a time, or who routinely fail to work a full work schedule have regularly received equal or higher ratings than employees who do work a full schedule. Officers who have limited experience, but meet the "preferred profile" are considered for promotion more readily than officers with proven performance and many years of service. Officers who pursue fair treatment for all employees are singled out for punishment or unfair scrutiny.

It would seem only fair and equitable for all officers to be evaluated on the basis of position description; duty performance; dedication to duty; longevity; and an evaluation process that removes the bias now present.

I suggest expanding the classification and pay system for Parole Officers. Presently pay grades allow only Parole Officer I and Parole Officer II. After five years employment, I suggest officers should be upgraded to the position of Parole Officer II. I recommend the creation of the position of Parole Officer III or Senior Parole Officer. This would allow promotion to increased levels of authority, or recognize longevity for officers who have been employed for ten years. In this manner, officers would be recognized for seniority and dedication to duty whether they seek or are appointed to increased levels of responsibility.

Finally, recognition of Parole Officers as law enforcement, as Kansas State Statute requires, would result in better morale, enhanced performance of duties, and increased service to citizens in the State of Kansas.

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