

Testimony to the State Employee Compensation Oversight Commission

On Behalf of the Council of Kansas Government Engineers and Scientists

October 15, 2007

Madam Chairperson and Members of the Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to appear in front of you again this morning. My name is Mark Hurt; I represent the Council of Kansas Government Engineers and Scientists, the meet and confer organization for engineering and science classifications in the employ of the State of Kansas.

Our organization is happy to see progress made towards a new pay plan and is generally satisfied with the outline of the system offered by the Hay Group. All of the classifications that our group represents would be included in the Professional Individual Contributor classification. As we understand it, the compensation for our classifications would be based on broad bands with market anchors. This would satisfy two of the issues of greatest contention for our members. As the commission members might remember from the first round of employee and organization comments, when you heard testimony from a few engineers and scientists, those issues were the disparity in pay between the State and the market and the oft necessity for individual to move into managerial positions to receive a pay increase.

The proposed compensation design also offer another significant advantage for our classifications over the existing system—the presence of the Professional Development Committees with representatives of each of the disciplines. The professional practice of science and engineering disciplines are often fairly nuanced with sub-disciplines and specialties, each subject to various market forces at any one time. It would not be reasonable to expect Human Resource departments to be current with the state of the art for these specialties, nor efficient when we could simply make use of those directly involved in the work.

Given that we are satisfied with the general outline of the proposed pay plan, I'll keep my remarks very brief and limited to only a couple of points that we hope are addressed.

First, our roles as technical experts can at times require us to advocate positions which may not be popular either politically or administratively. As regulators, project managers and consultant administrators, we may be required to say no or to advise against courses of action desired by those who employ us. We ask that the Legislature maintain civil service protection for our classifications. We have not heard this discussed previously by this commission. We believe that civil service protection is essential to maintain a cadre of professionals whose first loyalty and primary concern is their duty to the citizens of Kansas.

Second, as evidenced in prior testimony to this commission, technical professionals have been subject to the inequities of effects of wage compression compounded by rising market salaries for their services outside of state employment. Any relief to these inequities cannot come soon enough. The bulk of our classifications would begin the new pay plan in the second group, adding another year before managers would have the flexibility allowed by broadbanding to adjust individual salaries. The Hay Group has recommended a 5% increase in funding for State employee compensation for FY2009, in part as a general increase and in part as a targeted increase. We strongly ask that, rather than target specific job classification as before, please target individuals.

Many of the upper level technical job classifications are populated with individuals of 20 years or more tenure, individuals who are on the right of the pay matrix; while those who have been promoted into the same classifications with 10 or 12 years of service are on the left of the matrix. Basing targeted relief on the average salary in the class can be prejudicial against the younger professionals needed by the State. Rather than unintentionally fostering ill feelings by increasing pay for some classifications more than those for other closely related classes, please allow agencies to adjust individuals to be closer to their market salaries. The Legislature might also consider allowing agencies to use personnel funds available from vacancies or other sources to adjust individual salaries. We believe that this will better serve the cause of equitable salaries for State employees than adjustments for classifications.

Thank you for this opportunity. I would be happy to attempt to answer any questions you might have of me.

Mark Hurt
Council of Kansas Engineers and Scientists
