



A New Day... A Better Way... For State Employees

Testimony Presented to the Kansas State Employee Pay Plan Oversight Commission
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My name is Loren Kriegel and I want to thank the Commission for allowing me and my fellow members of the Kansas Organization of State Employees this opportunity to speak today regarding the new proposed State Employee Pay Plan. I began as Corrections Officer I in 2000, and was promoted to a CO II in 2001. This promotion only increased my pay by 10%, and with the latest increase approved by the Legislature, I now make \$14.63 per hour.

As a single parent, I take care of my two amazing daughters, ages 14 and 12 on a low-income budget with no assistance from SRS. It isn't easy to raise my daughters on the salary I currently make, but I am able to see them when they wake up and when they go to bed. I want to be the best father I can be and it hurts to have to say this, but I have to live with my parents because they are able help with child-care and paying bills. In order to make ends meet each month, I usually try to get as much overtime as possible, but this keeps me from seeing my children grow up. I actually work from 10pm to 6am so that I get to see them during the day. When my shift is over, I go home to get my daughters off to school around 7 or 7:30 each morning. During their school hours, I try to get some sleep in, but I get up around 2:30 to pick them up. After school is our special time to do homework and fix dinner together. But my favorite time of the day is when I put my girls to bed and I tuck them in. We read stories, talk about their hopes and their dreams. It is hard to leave them, but around 9 o'clock at night, I kiss them on the cheek and I head back to work.

At Topeka Correctional Facility, we are the only facility in the state that supervises female offenders. Our jobs are important - We protect the citizens of Kansas. The inmates may be women, but the offender roster is just as bad as a male facility. Officers are spit upon and have feces thrown at them. We see female inmates who rub menstruation on themselves. Some of the inmates have killed other inmates' family members, and we are the ones that monitor them. And of course, we are all called every name in the book. My typical day is less than typical, and what we do not only protects the inmates from harming themselves, but we serve to protect the citizens across Kansas. As a Corrections Officer though, it makes me sad to see the abuse and drugs some of the younger inmates have had to face in their lives.

Within Corrections across the state, turnover is high, mainly because of low pay for the jobs we do. Some institutions have turnover rates of more than 30%. Most of my colleagues work two jobs, sometimes three jobs, especially at Christmas in order to pay the bills. And importantly, many of us work for wages that are less than McDonald employees make. Many of us that stay with our jobs because, like myself, we hope to provide a better life for our children. I just want to be able to be a good father to my children and it is my dream that they will have a better life because I am able to be a role-model for them.



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Our current pay plan should adequately address the low pay if it were adequately funded. The new proposed pay plan for those of us in protective services is similar to our present plan – a step based pay plan. I do not support merit based pay due to the buddy-system it creates. I hope that protective services doesn't change to a zoned plan where all raises are based on the friendship an employee has with his or her supervisor. I believe that our current plan is perfect, in theory. We are rewarded for retention and institutional knowledge in addition to the pay increases based off of a satisfactory evaluation.

However, the problem is NOT with the plan, but the administering of the plan. Pay increases have NOT been funded for the last 6 years, except for the crumbs we received this year. My daughter's school supplies, the gas to get her to school, and even the price of milk has increased on a scale much greater than my pay has increased. Even though I don't make it to every recital or school play, I work overtime so that my girls can be in these events.

So my question regarding this pay plan is this: Regardless of the plan an employee of the state falls under, how will this Commission ensure that raises are actually funded? The Commission has proposed plans to consider, but I believe that the Commission should endorse keeping the current plan and ensure the funding of raises. If raises aren't funded, and salaries aren't adequately paid, things will only get worse. The state will loose people like me that do these jobs, and the people that do them well. If it gets any worse, this state will suffer, my family will suffer. Simply put: I refuse to give up being a good father and being able to tuck my girls in at night.
