

OPEA Supports Pay Initiative For Corrections Employees

The Oklahoma Public Employees Association, the only organization publicly supporting correctional employee pay raises announced during the October Board of Corrections meeting, has presented the OPEA DOC Council goals for 2009 to DOC Director Justin Jones.

DOC is asking the state for an additional \$318 million, \$36 million of which would be used to hire additional probation and parole officers and for pay raises.

The agency is requesting \$26.5 million for a 5-percent performance-based

pay increase for employees meeting or exceeding standards, to move 48 percent of correctional officers to the salary midpoint, and to implement two long-time OPEA initiatives: shift differential and the addition of the new correctional officer career step – master sergeant.

“The shift differential amount is continuing to be discussed, but we are pleased that Director Jones is moving toward this initiative,” OPEA Deputy Director Scott Barger commented. “OPEA has advocated for the establishment of shift differential since the

late 1990s, most recently with our OSP chapter over the summer in response to the lack of staff and mandatory overtime.”

OPEA has

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Listen to DOC Director Justin Jones on the OPEA Break Room Podcast Dec 4.

To listen, go to www.opea.org.



Turnover In State Government Is Costly, Executive Director Tells House Committee



OPEA Executive Director Sterling Zearley told the House General Government Subcommittee on Government Modernization Oct. 14 that turnover is costing Oklahoma taxpayers approximately \$85 million annually. The estimate, which is calculated by the Office of Personnel Management each year, is considered to be a conservative number.

Zearley spoke to the subcommittee during an interim study on “The impact of cost and implications of state employee turnover.”

“We can’t keep going down this road,” said Zearley. “Turnover in Oklahoma state government is 13.5 percent, compared to 8.2 percent for state and local government nationally.”

“But that is not the whole story,” he told the panel. “There are classifications with turnover rates so high, the quality of services can be compromised. Recently, we learned the turnover rate for patient care assistants at the Norman Veterans Center is 95

Jeanette Rice, senior vice president for corporate and human resources at American Fidelity Assurance Company, briefs the House General Government Subcommittee on Government Modernization as Rep. Dennis Johnson, foreground, looks on.

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Special Report

Oklahoma Prison Gangs

In this special series of articles, the OPEA DOC Council will provide information on the major gangs in Oklahoma prisons. The groups we will discuss are recognized nationally for their participation in organized crime and violence, and they all have a presence among Oklahoma’s prison population. Any comments or suggestions on ways to improve this series should be e-mailed to Scott Barger at scottb@opea.org.

Bloods and Crips

Overview

The Los Angeles-based Bloods and Crips are probably the most widely recognized gangs in America due to the media exposure received in the 1980s. These groups have migrated throughout the country and are seen in most states and their prison populations. There are literally hundreds of sets or individual gangs under the main Blood and Crip names. They are no longer racially specific.

In Florida, the presence of the Chicago-



based Folk Nation and People Nation is so prevalent that the Crips and Bloods have developed allies under these alliances. Bloods traditionally align themselves with the People Nation and Crips with the Folk Nation. This alignment may vary for local jurisdictions due to competition for drug territory or violence against one another.

These alignments are often communicated in their graffiti. There are, however, areas of the

country where Crips and Folk groups such as the Black Gangster Disciples are in competition for the drug trade and, thus, are rivals. This is illustrated in their graffiti by use of the “eight ball.” If the eight ball is drawn or displayed intact, then the sets are aligned. If it is cracked or drawn through, there is dissension between the groups. The eight ball is significant because when you bring the hand sign for the Crips and the “pitch-fork” hand sign together, they form an eight ball.

Facts - Bloods

- Originated in Southern California to defend against the Crips.

- Generally align with People Nation sets.

Identifiers/Symbols

- The color red.



- Red bandannas or rags.
- The word “Piru” (the original Blood gang).
- Crossed out “C” in words as disrespect for Crips.



- Other disrespectful anti-Crip graffiti.

Facts - Crips

- Originated in Los Angeles in the late 1960s.
- Migrated throughout the

United States.

- Generally align with Folk Nation sets.

- Extremely violent.

- Multiracial.

Identifiers/symbols

- The color blue.

- Blue bandannas and rags.

- Use the letter “C” in place of “B” in writing in disrespect for Bloods.

- Call each other “Cuzz.”

- Call themselves “Blood Killas” (BK).

- Wear British Knight (BK) tennis shoes.

Turnover Is Costly (Continued From Page 1)

percent. We must do better for our veterans.”

OPEA unveiled a first step toward solving the turnover problem in the State Employee Turnover Reduction Act. The proposed legislation would require that state employees be provided with a 2.5-percent pay increase each year until turnover costs fall below \$40 million. This would not exclude the need for the Legislature to provide an across-the-board pay raise for state employees.

“State employees are feeling the crunch of the economy and the rising cost of insurance,” said Zearley. “The top priority when the Legislature returns in 2009 must be to grant a pay raise for state employees.”

Zearley echoed the data presented by OPM that state employee pay had consistently tracked more than 10 percent below market in the past 10 years. He also said compensation for unclassified employees has increased almost twice as much as for classified workers.

“Even though agencies have the

“Agencies have not been provided with funding for the pay movement mechanisms. It’s like having a check with no money in the bank.”
 – OPEA Executive Director Sterling Zearley

statutory authority to increase salaries through pay movement mechanisms, classified employees are limited to legislative pay raises,” said Zearley. “Agencies have not been provided with funding for the pay movement mechanisms. It’s like having a check with no money in the bank.”

Another important point in OPEA’s presentation was a comparison of the state employee longevity plan and step increases for other jobs (See Table 1).

The longevity schedule for state

Table 1

**Comparison Of The State Employee Longevity Plan
And Step Increases For Other Jobs
(Total Increase After 10 Years)**

Highway Patrol Steps (seven years)	\$23,836
Oklahoma Teacher Steps	\$4,350
Federal Employee Steps	\$10,580
Oklahoma State Employee Longevity	\$1,062

employees has not changed in 20 years.

The panel also heard from Jeanette Rice, senior vice president for corporate and human resources at American Fidelity Assurance Company, who gave a report from the Governor’s Task Force on State Employee Compensation. She outlined the recommendations of the task force, which completed its work in January 2008.

“The state needs a total compensation plan, which must be communicated to employees,” said Rice. “Pay adjustments should be made regularly based on what is happening in the economy.”

According to Rice, the state should plan ahead at least five years for total compensation, benefits and salary.

“State agencies cannot recruit new employees based on the hope that the Legislature will provide pay raises,” Zearley emphasized. “What do you tell new employees who want to know about career progression and when they will receive pay raises?”

Zearley did not concur with Rice when she said defined benefit pension plans are losing their popularity.

“Defined benefit plans are still the norm in the public sector,” said Zearley. “Only one state, Alaska, has discontin-

ued its pension plan for a 401(k)-type plan. With the recent problems in the stock market, I don’t think it’s a viable option.”

Secretary for Human Resources Oscar Jackson answered questions from the panel about initiatives in other states.

“States that have been successful in the human resource area are making a long-term commitment to their employees,” said Jackson. “Most of what we would want to do has a price tag.”

Following the hearing, Zearley spoke with several reporters about the need to address state employee pay in the next legislative session.

“State agencies cannot recruit new employees based on the hope that the Legislature will provide pay raises.”
 – OPEA Executive Director Sterling Zearley

“We are pleased that Rep. John Wright has brought the issue forward this early in the process through this interim study,” said Zearley. “Several of the panelists agreed with OPEA that we must have a long-term plan to address state employee pay in Oklahoma. As so many veteran workers reach retirement, the state will need to recruit and retain the next generation of career state workers.”

Battle For The Beds Begins

The Oklahoma Department of Corrections is asking the state Legislature for funding that would include \$318 million for new construction.

According to the budget request, the DOC would like to expand the Oklahoma State Penitentiary in McAlester by 1,568 beds and is also considering adding more than 300 beds at the Mack Alford Correctional Facility in Stringtown.

The DOC plan, which calls for construction to include seven buildings at OSP, is contingent on the recommendations of an architectural study. The contract, awarded by the Legislative Services Bureau, will not be complete before the start of the next legislative session. The study was part of the recommendations made by the recent

MGT audit of the agency.

According to OPEA, the agency is in dire need of maximum security beds.

“At some point you have to really wonder what it takes to move the Legislature to run government like a business and replace the ancient housing units and the crumbling infrastructure.”

– OPEA Deputy Director Scott Barger

“The conditions of the housing at OSP is not conducive to the staffing levels,” said OPEA Deputy Director Scott Barger. “At some point you have to really wonder what it takes to move the Legislature to run government like a business and replace the ancient housing units and the crumbling infrastructure.”

“This request will certainly be up to the Legislature, considering the size,” Barger added. “OPEA is requesting a meeting with DOC Director Justin Jones to discuss the budget as well as ways in which we can partner with the agency to have the best chance for success.”

Pay Initiative (Continued From Page 1)

learned that DOC is considering moving away from rotating shifts.

“OPEA brought this initiative to

then Director James Saffle, after OPEA returned from a fact-finding mission to examine Colorado’s DOC,” OPEA Executive Director Sterling Zearley said. “CDOC has little turnover due to quality salaries and bidding procedures for shifts. Included in the shift assign-

ments were an 8-percent shift differential for midnights and 6 percent for evenings. It really gave employees a choice.”

“We have met with Director Jones about these initiatives and applaud him for taking a bold step in requesting pay raises for staff and in instituting additional career progression for uniformed staff,” Zearley added. “We were also

appreciative of the director taking time to listen to our concerns about the needs related to non-uniformed staff

and career progression. Many of the agency’s positions are dead ends, and the agency needs to look into additional career progression in areas such as

case management, maintenance and food service. This will allow these dedicated employees an opportunity to gain pay raises as well.”

Zearley pointed out that during a meeting with Jones, OPEA presented him with the DOC Council’s goals for 2009 and asked him to take a comprehensive look at improving starting salaries, educational incentive pay, train-

ing/trainer pay, physical fitness incentive pay and bilingual pay.

Jones expressed interest in several areas outlined by the Council.

“The true 20 for all corrections employees, along with the special extended service incentive for employees who serve past their 20th year, as well as looking into issuing pepper spray to all correctional staff, were areas where we are finding common ground,” said Zearley. “The agency is in the process of deploying pepper spray in some facilities on a small scale, but we are advocating for a greater scope.”

“We also had a great discussion about privatization, staffing and training,” said Zearley. “These are all areas that Director Jones continues to be concerned with. DOC is currently involved in upgrading and enhancing its training program, and Director Jones has accepted our offer to help sponsor additional training centered on internal security threats, gang management, covert inmate communications and several other areas.”

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– OPEA Executive Director Sterling Zearley

JHCC Corrections Employees Meet With State Legislators

Three legislators traveled to Lexington Oct. 22 for a town hall meeting in the visiting room at Joseph Harp Correctional Center.

Sixty-five corrections employees from Harp and the Lexington Assessment and Reception Center (LARC) heard from Sen. John Sparks, Rep. Lisa Billy and Rep. Scott Martin.

After a presentation by OPEA Executive Director Sterling Zearley, Mike Cagle and Rick Allen led the meeting, facilitating a discussion with the legislators on issues that are important to state employees.

Sparks told the group that more employees should be active members of

OPEA.

“The more involved, the better,” said Sparks. “Encourage your co-workers to join OPEA.”

When asked to list their priorities for the 2009 legislative session, all three lawmakers said state employee compensation would be among their main concerns.

“We should stop the privatization of prisons,” Sparks added. “I am not in favor of money going to private prisons. Legislators should invest in facilities. If we are going to make the decision to incarcerate people and have longer sentences, we must build prisons.”

“Not having a long-term compensation plan for employees is no way to do business,” said Billy. “Total compensation should be considered, including flex scheduling and increasing longevity.”

“I think it is important to keep jobs secure in troubled economic times,” Martin added, agreeing that total compensation is important.

“I support the benefit allowance paying for insurance,” said Martin. “But employees should not receive salary in their benefit allowance.”

Billy pointed out that compensation paid in the benefit allowance cannot be counted in calculating retirement.

All three legis-



lators showed interest in moving corrections employees from the Oklahoma Public Employees Retirement System to the Oklahoma Law Enforcement Retirement System.

Regarding the *(Continued On Page 8)*

Private Prison Indicted In Death Of Prisoner

A private prison company based in Florida has been indicted in the death of a Texas prisoner just days before his planned release.

The indictment alleges The GEO Group let other inmates fatally beat Gregorio de la Rosa Jr. with padlocks stuffed into socks.

He died four days before his scheduled release from a facility in Raymondville in south Texas.

A jury ordered the company to pay de la Rosa's family \$47.5 million in a 2006 civil judgment. He died in 2001.

The GEO Group, formerly known as Wackenhut Corrections Corp., owns one prison in Lawton and currently wants to expand its capacity.



Corrections Professionals Cited At First Medal Of Honor Ceremony

More than 100 corrections professionals representing more than 20 organizations gathered in Flagstaff, Ariz., Sept. 26 to honor 11 recipients at the first ever American Correctional Officer Medal of Honor Ceremony.

The Medal of Honor, the highest award given by the national organization, is presented to corrections employees who distinguish themselves with outstanding examples of bravery or heroism.

Attending on behalf of Oklahoma's corrections employees were Oklahoma Public Employees Association Corrections Board members Carrie Croy and Mike Rogers and OPEA Deputy Director Scott Barger.

The 2008 Medal of Honor recipient, Correctional Officer Elizabeth O'Campo of Ironwood State Prison in California, was on hand to receive her award.

O'Campo earned the honor for her action after entering D Facility, Building Three, to deliver paperwork to the unit officers. She saw Officer J. Rivera talking with several inmates and then saw one of the inmates attack Rivera with a weapon. Both Rivera and the inmate went to the ground. O'Campo immediately drew her baton and attempted to

subdue the inmate.

At this point, approximately nine more inmates entered the fight, many of them striking and kicking Rivera in the head and body while he was on the ground. O'Campo, still using her baton, came under attack by some of the inmates, as well. She fended off repeated attacks, each time returning to defend Rivera.

Another unit officer attempted to help, but, as he left the control room, he was struck in the face with a trash can and knocked to the ground, semiconscious. O'Campo was now forced to

defend two downed officers against multiple attackers, using only her baton. She continued to ward off her attackers while defending the officers to the best of her ability. And when the control room officer attempted to use his pepper spray, he unintentionally sprayed O'Campo. Undaunted, she continued to respond to the attack on her and her fellow officers until additional staff arrived.

During the brutal attack,



Correctional Officer Elizabeth O'Campo of Ironwood State Prison in California was cited at the recent American Correctional Officer Medal of Honor Ceremony.



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O'Campo was struck repeatedly on the upper torso, face and head, sustaining hemorrhaging of the brain. After being treated, she asked to look at the video schematic of the inmates who were on the dayroom floor at the time. She was able to identify most of those who were involved in the incident.

O'Campo was instrumental in defending the lives of her fellow officers and, subsequently, helping identify and prosecute the inmates involved.

MPC Considers OPEA Member's Case

The Oklahoma Merit Protection Commission considered two cases at its monthly meeting Oct. 22, one of them an appeal from a member of the Oklahoma Public Employees Association.

Kelly Price, a former employee of the Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs, filed an internal agency grievance claiming she was not being paid at the rate of pay agreed upon when she was hired. The ODVA denied the grievance, and an appeal was filed with the Commission asserting that the grievance decision was not correct and that Price was not being compensated at the correct rate of pay.

The Commission's executive director dismissed the appeal by concluding that the Commission did not have jurisdiction over underpayments. OPEA Employee Relations Coordinator Clyde McLendon filed a petition for reconsideration, asserting that the executive director's decision constituted probable error and that it was in the public interest that the decision be overturned.

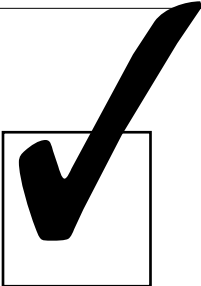
"Clearly, the Commission has jurisdiction over both underpayments and overpayments, according to Title 74 O.S., Section 840-2.19. With that in mind, I believed the Commission would have to investigate and rule on the issue of Ms. Kelly's rate of pay before a conclusion could be reached as to whether or not she was underpaid," McLendon said.

McLendon presented his argument to the commissioners, and, after an executive session, they voted unanimously to remand the appeal back to the executive director for further investigation.

"Our members should have confidence the Commission is protecting their rights under the merit system, and I am pleased that the commissioners recognized an error occurred in this appeal and took action to correct the error," McLendon pointed out.

For further information on your rights in the grievance and appeal processes, contact McLendon at (405) 524-6764 or cmac@opea.org.

"Our members should have confidence the Commission is protecting their rights under the merit system, and I am pleased that the commissioners recognized an error occurred in this appeal and took action to correct the error."
 - Clyde McLendon



Yes! I'd like to participate in activities to help strengthen the voice of state employees and improve our jobs and the services we provide to Oklahomans.

OPEA Dues Options

- Basic - \$15** OPEA membership
- Bronze - \$20** OPEA membership, OPEAPAC donation
- Silver - \$27** OPEA membership, Identity theft
- Gold - \$29** OPEA membership, Pre-Paid Legal
- Platinum - \$39** OPEA membership, Pre-Paid Legal, Identity theft

Oklahoma Public Employees Association Membership Application

Please return to: OPEA, 13 N.E. 28th St., Oklahoma City, Okla. 73105 or visit www.opea.org.



First Name _____ Last Name _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone () _____ Work Phone () _____

Home E-mail _____ Work E-mail _____

Agency _____ Work Location _____ Position _____

Work Location Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Work Fax Number () _____ Who introduced you to OPEA? _____

Payroll Deduction Authorization

I hereby authorize the state of Oklahoma to deduct from my pay the amount checked below required to purchase dues in the Oklahoma Public Employees Association, subject to my right to revoke this order by written notice to my employer.

Dues Options: Basic - \$15 Bronze - \$20 Silver - \$27 Gold - \$29 Platinum - \$39

Signature _____ SS# _____ Birth Date _____

OPEA's standard dues are \$15 per month. Annual dues: state employees - \$180; retirees - \$60; associates - \$20; corporate affiliates - \$300. Contributions or gifts to OPEA are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes. However, dues payments are deductible as a miscellaneous itemized deduction. Dues include your annual subscription to *The Advocate* (a \$4 value). Your \$15 monthly dues payment includes a \$2.25 contribution to OPEAPAC. I do not want \$2.25 per month of my dues to go to OPEAPAC.

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DOC UPDATE

A Publication Of The Oklahoma Public Employees Association

November 2008

Corrections Employees (Continued From Page 5)

DOC audit, the legislators concurred that the governor should be removed from the parole process, with any savings returned to DOC.

“Public safety is a core function of government,” said Martin. “DOC should have a long-term plan for building.”

“No more private prisons. I don’t want Oklahoma to be a housing unit for other states.”

– Sen. John Sparks

“No more private prisons,” Sparks responded when asked about privatization. “I don’t want Oklahoma to be a housing unit for other states.”

In closing statements, the legislators indicated that they appreciated the opportunity to visit with corrections employees and said more legislators should visit DOC facilities throughout the state.

“This was a great forum to begin discussing DOC issues for next legislative session,” said Zearley. “We hope more legislators will take time to visit state facilities and offices in their districts.”



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