

Testimony on HB 5005 – Department of Corrections Budget

I graduated high school in June 2001. After September 11th of that year, I knew my calling in life was public service. I joined the United States Army soon after and dedicated the next four years and ten months as an Infantryman. I spent a total of two years and two months in Iraq on two separate tours. Believe me when I tell you, I know the definition of hardship.

Upon departing from the military honorably as a Sergeant in a war time era, I saw a new horizon in public service. The Department Of Corrections was said to be a paramilitary organization with outstanding teamwork and dedication. I jumped at the opportunity of becoming a Correctional Officer at Oregon State Correctional Institution, being fully aware that it would be a thankless yet necessary job in public safety.

For five years and eight months now I have endured. I have endured shift work, working weekends, holidays, odd hours and mandatory overtime. I have endured pay freezes, furloughs (28 unpaid days off to be exact) and paying a little extra for medical benefits than previous years. I have endured annual training hours being reduced which I find invaluable in maintaining and learning necessary skills in this unique career. Moreover, I have endured almost unimaginable acts of human beings at their worst in regard to day to day dealings with convicted felons while maintaining a professional posture.

With the recent past and present financial hardships of the State of Oregon along with the rest of the country; coupled with the very nature of this profession which I chose, I find some of these hardships tolerable, even necessary. I was made a soldier taught to “suck it up and drive on” long before dealing with any of this.

However, when it comes to the subject of vacation or more accurately the lack there-of, I become passionate. The want and need to be away from this line of work if only for a little while is of the utmost importance in maintaining a balanced lifestyle, especially in this profession. I assure you, the stressors, shift work and environment is harsh enough to convince even the hardest of souls of the necessity to take leave. If only it were as easy as giving the opportunity for those souls to walk in the shoes of any line staff in any prison in Oregon for a sustained amount of time...

I won't go into detail about the ridiculous ratio of staff vacation hours earned at OSCI vs. weeks in the year available to bid vacation (which I assure you aren't enough). I won't go into detail about letters of agreement that were signed between the State of Oregon and AOCE during collective bargaining concerning a cap of vacation weeks that staff can currently bid (meant to ensure that more vacation be spread to more staff). I won't go into detail about OSCI's security staff's availability to sell back vacation hours in lieu of taking vacation (obviously to offset vacation weeks being bid).

Please understand this; **THIRTY SEVEN** line staff at OSCI were unable to bid any annual vacation for the 2013 annual vacation bid including myself which is an increase in staff's inability to utilize vacation from the previous year. The senior most staff member unable to bid even a single week of vacation was one month from being employed for **6** years! Approximately one fourth of the security staff at OSCI were forced to endure the fact that despite their dedication, hard work and perseverance in these already

pressing times, they were not going to be able to take a single week of bided / advanced notice vacation to rest and relax despite everyone earning a minimum of three weeks of vacation per year. We (line staff) typically bid vacation once per year. In the little more than five years I've been employed, vacation weeks to be bid during annual vacation bid has run out at least three times that I'm certain of.

I find this startling and incomprehensible hardship that I and others are asked to endure year after year to be appalling. Having a week of vacation to look forward to, to plan for, to day dream about, long before ever taking the vacation week itself certainly boost's morale; Not only at work but also in the family's of every staff member. I'm a realist and certainly understand the operational needs of the 24/7 365 day per year, mandatory staffed facility which I work at. I know not everyone where I work can have the weeks of Christmas, or the fourth of July or Thanksgiving off. I know it's not feasible for everyone to be able to have a summer vacation in July, August, or September. However, I also believe that if you work where I work, everyone should be able to take week blocks of vacation with advanced notice. No reason, no justification, no money shortfall too large, no politics will ever make it ok that multiple staff at OSCI frequently aren't able to take a single week of vacation, let alone the vacation hours they earn every year. I don't believe that any reasonable, moral human being could argue that point.

I am especially appalled when I see an occasional E-mail of my superintendent or assistant superintendent's notifying everyone at OSCI that they will be absent for the following week, instead of a heartfelt letter of apology regarding thirty seven staff's inability to take even a single week of vacation for the following year. My inner most leadership learning's from my military up bringing are offended. I was taught to take care of priorities, "my mission, my soldiers, and then myself". In that order and that order alone.

I realize that my chosen organization of employment (the DOC) is funded by Oregon tax dollars and thereby subject to tax short falls and hardships. I believe I and we have shown that understanding in the numerous hardships, budget cuts and reductions, discomfort and even distrust in good faith bargaining between the State of Oregon and AOCE over the years. All I am really asking for is your realization and help if you can in that this chosen profession of mine requires time; Time to reset and re-adjust; Time to revisit family that doesn't understand shift work; Time to relax and rest. All I am really asking for is to utilize the benefits that I already earn.

Again I graciously thank you for reading.

David Davies

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