

Our Civil Service Act

Questions Answered by Commission

The officers of the State Employees Association have received many questions from employees and citizens regarding employment conditions and Civil Service in the state government. The following more commonly asked questions are here answered briefly by the Civil Service Department to all association members so that they will be able to answer intelligently questions of like nature.

1. WHAT IS THE PRINCIPAL PURPOSE OF THE OREGON CIVIL SERVICE LAW?

Many persons have been led to believe that Civil Service exists mainly for the employees' benefit. Actually, Civil Service has as its principal objective a sound system of personnel administration necessary to the effective operation of any large public or private organization. Many of the industrial relations programs of larger American business concerns are similar in many respects to the Oregon Civil Service System. Under this system there are mutual benefits and obligations for both employees and employers. The Civil Service Commission serves as an impartial third party representing the general public interest in seeing that fair and uniform personnel practices are maintained to the fullest extent possible.

2. IS THE CIVIL SERVICE SYSTEM IN OREGON THE SAME AS CIVIL SERVICE IN OTHER PUBLIC JURISDICTIONS?

The Oregon Civil Service Law is one of the more modern laws of its type. The experience of other jurisdictions under Civil Service was studied in developing the Oregon law. It was modeled closely after the model civil service law recommended by the National Civil Service League—an organization of private citizens who are interested in better government practices. The law also

was reviewed by state officials and employee groups and revisions which were necessary in view of Oregon's own problems were made before the law was adopted. In actual operation the Oregon law varies somewhat from systems provided in the federal government, the city of Portland, and many other public jurisdictions. It is similar in most respects to Civil Service Systems more recently placed into effect such as in the state of Minnesota. The basic principles underlying the Civil Service System aimed at improvement of the public service are substantially similar in all Civil Service Systems.

3. WHAT ABOUT THE QUESTION OF EMPLOYEE DISCHARGE?

Depending upon the person to whom you are talking, you will frequently hear that it is "too easy" or that it is "too hard" to discharge an employee under Civil Service. Actually, in Oregon employee discharge policy has been set on a workable basis providing protection to the employee and at the same time recognizing that department heads must have authority to discharge employees whose work is not satisfactory. Usually the conditions surrounding each individual case will govern discharge. Employees are given absolute protection against dismissal because of politics, race, or religion. In all other cases the department head makes the final decision based upon the employee's work performance, but employees are entitled to a fair hearing. In those cases where personality conflicts are responsible, the employee may be given work under a different supervisor. In general, experience seems to indicate that this system is working out reasonably well. Although a number of dismissals are made every month in the state service, the Civil Service Department has had relatively few requests for investigation by