Salary Survey Finds State Wages Lag Oregon Labor Market by 6%

Salaries paid by state government lag salaries paid by competing employers in Oregon -- both public and private -- and those paid by four western states.

That statement summarizes the findings of the Personnel Division's annual salary survey which came off the state's printing presses last week.

The survey found state pay lags the Oregon labor market by about six per cent, and trails the average salary paid by the state governments in four western states by eight per cent.

"Analysis of the data collected in this survey indicates that in the last year wage rates have increased on the order of approximately six per cent both within Oregon and for the western state governments. This is a sharp rise from the 5.25 per cent increase found between 1971 and 1972," the report says.

"As a result of these increases, the State of Oregon's salary position in the labor market has remained virtually unchanged from 1972 to 1973. The 6.2 per cent overall increase granted to state employes in July, 1973, approximately equaled the general rise in wage levels."

While the overall wage increase in the statewide survey was approximately six per cent, the survey found various occupational groups increased at different rates. The trades (electricians, plumbers, carpenters, etc.) recorded the highest percentage salary increase of 13.3 per cent. The engineering group was next at 6.1 per cent, followed by clerical with 5.8, secretarial ith 4.4 and medical with 3.5 per cent.

The Personnel Division survey found the cost of living showed a similar rise. In the 12 months ending in September, 1973, the national Consumer Price Index rose by 7.4 per cent. The Portland CPI showed a 6.3 per cent increase from July 1972, to July, 1973.

The statewide survey included interviews with public employers and private firms employing about 90,000 employes. Western state governments surveyed included California, Colorado, Nevada and Washington.

OSU Plan to Abolish Custodial Worker Jobs Draws OSEA Fire

OSEA has lodged a strong protest against Oregon State University's plan to abolish a majority of the new custodial worker 2 positions recently established under a conciliation agreement between the Bureau of Labor and the Personnel Division.

Under the plan, employes assigned to the custodial worker 2 positions to be abolished will be offered demotion to custodial worker 1 positions in lieu of layoff.

The Association's protest was made in a sharply worded letter to OSU President Robert MacVicar from Assistant Executive Secretary Everett B. Stiles.

The conciliation agreement was put into effect earlier this year, Stiles noted. It was designed to end the discrimination against female employes classified as domestic workers.

In conducting a federal contract compliance review at OSU in 1971, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare found no substantial difference in the duties performed by domestic and custodial workers. Yet it found that most custodial workers were male and were paid from $113 to $125 a month more than the domestic workers, most of whom were female. It said that was discrimination and ordered the school to end it.

Under terms of the conciliation agreement, the Personnel Division agreed to review the duties of domestic workers and properly classify each position. As a result, a large number were reclassified to custodial worker 2 and given a raise in pay.

"Now, only a few months after the employes were reclassified, OSU is formulating a plan to abolish a majority of the new custodial worker 2 positions, lower the job requirements, and offer employes filling those positions a demotion to custodial worker 1 with a corresponding reduction in pay," Stiles charged.

"Such a scheme is, in OSEA's view, a blatant attempt to circumvent both the agreement and the HEW order to end discrimination," he declared.

Stiles pointed out that an OSEA representative was told the plan was devised because OSU does not have money in its budget to pay all employes who were reclassified to custodial worker 2.

"It should be noted," Stiles told MacVicar, "that you and your budget officers knew of the discrimination finding of HEW and of the possible reclassification of employes long before the 1973 legislature met. Legislators should have been informed of the university's liability."

If OSU lacks the money to keep its custodial workers at the two level, it should examine budget priorities and attempt to transfer funds to payroll from some other source, Stiles said.

"If a careful examination of the budget reveals other funds cannot be diverted, then OSU officials, along with the chancellor, should request an appropriation from the Emergency Board. That, in OSEA's view, would be a fair and equitable attempt to correct the problem and is the least OSU can do for it its custodial work force," he said.

State Workers Due 9 Holidays in '74

State employes will get nine paid holidays next year, according to Personnel Division rules and the 1974 calendar.

But what's even better, perhaps, is the fact that the majority of the nine holidays will fall on a Monday, giving state workers five "three-day weekends."

State employes will get the following paid holidays during 1974:

New Year's Day, Tuesday, January 1st.
Lincoln's Birthday, Monday, February 4th.
Washington's Birthday, Monday, February 28th.
Memorial Day, Monday, May 27th.
Independence Day, Thursday, July 4th.
Labor Day, Monday, September 2nd.
Veterans' Day, Monday, November 11th.
Thanksgiving Day, Thursday, November 28th.
Christmas Day, Wednesday, December 25th.

Whenever a holiday falls on Sunday, state employes get the following Monday off. Holidays that fall on Saturday are lost. None of the 1974 holidays fall on either of those two days. The last state employes lost because it fell on a Saturday was New Year's Day, 1972.

Employes who are required to work on holidays that fall within their regular work schedule are given, in addition to their regular monthly pay, compensatory time off for the time worked or, at the discretion of the agency head, paid in cash for the time worked.

Holiday pay, regardless of whether it's in the form of cash or compensatory time off, must be given at the rate of time and one-half.

OSEA, Justice Dept. Negotiate Contract

OSEA and Attorney General Lee Johnson's Department of Justice ended nearly two years of labor strife recently when the two parties agreed upon a collective bargaining contract.

In the two years that have passed since Justice employes elected the Association as their representative, bargaining talks were repeatedly broken off as both sides exchanged charges and counter-charges.

Earlier this year the Public Employe Relations Board held a new representation election. Employes re-elected OSEA by a vote of 59-16. Following the election, the PERB postponed a hearing of OSEA's charges against the agency pending attempts by both parties to resolve their differences and return to the bargaining table.

The contract is similar to those OSEA has negotiated in a number of other agencies, with the exception of the grievance procedure. Justice negotiators agreed to institute a streamlined, one-step procedure in which an employe's grievance will be heard by the deputy attorney general within six days from the date it is filed. If not resolved to the employe's satisfaction it may be submitted to the PERB or binding arbitration.