

January 17, 2013

As many of you may have read, legislators in the General Assembly are proposing to reject the recommendations of the Delaware Compensation Commission. I join in agreement with those state lawmakers.

Let me start by saying that the commissioners did the best they could to recommend modernizing the salaries of certain Executive Branch secretaries and members of the Judicial branch. I applaud their efforts in what could not have been an easy or popular obligation.

Having said that, this report comes at a bad time. At the state level, we are facing budgetary challenges. Due to national events, the good citizens of this state (and all states) have seen a rise in their taxes, with the expectation that federal cuts to services are coming. In addition, we, as state legislators, will have to make some tough decisions as they relate to \$200 million in tax increases that are set to start expiring this year. The fact is state funds are tight. At such a time, it would be inappropriate, dare I even say irresponsible, to give those already making six-figure salaries a raise of any amount without recommending a similar increase to those who make a third – or even lower – of that salary. To implement a pay hike for the upper echelon of state employment would only create a morale problem among our rank and file employees. It's unfair to our state workers and it is one more reason why I cannot support the commission's report at this time.

There are those who say that the salaries of someone already making \$119,000 as a cabinet secretary must be increased in order to compete with the private sector. I would suggest that increasing the salary to \$121,000 (in one case) isn't necessarily going to attract any more of a quality individual to that particular post. Serving the people of Delaware is a privilege and one that should be treated as such, especially by our top tier employees. I would even go further to suggest that if you are serving the state strictly based on pay and not because of a sense of duty, perhaps state employment isn't for you .

I know that if the commission's report were to be adopted, the salaries would not go into effect until 2014. However, until we have the full fiscal picture in front of us, we should not be making budgetary commitments a year in advance. With good fiscal management and a few years' time, we may even have a "SURPLUS" –which sounds like an alien concept– in our state coffers. If that were the case, that could give us the freedom to not only do what was necessary to modernize the pay scale of the top tier, but also to take care of those who work just as hard for our state but for less pay. Until then, however, my answer is NO to the 2013 Compensation Commission Report.

Submitted by:

State Representative Jeff Spiegelman