

IOWA TRANSPARENCY NEWSLETTER



Inquisitive Minds Want to Know

by Jennifer L. Crull

This last month we have added two new links on the Iowa Transparency website. The first one is an overtime link for the state of Iowa. The second link is “Follow the Money,” which will take you to a site by the National Institute on Money in State Politics. While neither title may quickly grab your attention, both websites have a lot of information that is very useful and informative. This issue of Iowa Transparency Newsletter is going to look at the data that is included in these websites and how it affects you. So let’s take a ride on the information super-highway.

The first stop is the “State Employee Overtime and Comp Time” link for the state of Iowa. This link is housed on the *Des Moines Register’s* website.¹ This website points out that “Iowa taxpayers spent almost \$61.5 million on overtime costs for state employees during the past two fiscal years.”² Table 1 shows the top ten state employees who received overtime pay

in 2009. This table also includes the employees’ contracted wages for the coming year, their overtime, and their total wages for the year. As you can see, the majority of the employees received more in overtime than their contract wage was supposed to be.

As you can interpret from the table, nine of the top ten employees are Resident Treatment Workers (RTW). With a little searching of the Department of Administrative Services website, I was able to find out the pay range for RTW is a minimum of \$14.10 an hour or \$29,328.00 a year to a maximum of \$20.60 an hour or \$42,848.00.³ One has to wonder the justification of spending more on overtime for an employee when you can hire someone for much less money. The starting wage of this position is \$29,328.00 a year.⁴ We have heard arguments that it is more cost effective to pay overtime versus hiring people. I would go along with that argument if it was a temporary situ-

ation, but if you look at Table 2, you will see that these employees have been making much more than their contracted wages for the past several years.⁵

When we review the job description for the RTW position, it states that “No specific education or experience is required.”⁶ So, a job with no specialized education can allow a state employee to be the sixth top paid employee for the Department of Human Services at the Woodward Resource Center.⁷ If you look at the wages of the employees and figure their overtime wage based on their hourly wage, this data shows that employees are working anywhere from 24 to 40 hours a week of overtime. Another thing to consider is that these employees are working in a healthcare field. I don’t think I would like my loved one being taken care of by an employee who works 64 to 80 hours a week. While we all know that we have to work those types of hours from time to time, these employees are working this

**IOWA TRANSPARENCY
NEWSLETTER**

October 2010
Volume 3, Number 10
Public Interest Institute
Dr. Don Racheter,
President

IOWA TRANSPARENCY NEWSLETTER is a monthly newsletter reporting on government transparency in our state.

IOWA TRANSPARENCY NEWSLETTER is published by Public Interest Institute at Iowa Wesleyan College, a nonpartisan, nonprofit, research and educational institute whose activities are supported by contributions from private individuals, corporations, companies, and foundations. The Institute does **not** accept government grants.

Contributions are tax-deductible under sections 501(c)(3) and 170 of the Internal Revenue Code.

Permission to reprint or copy in whole or part is granted, provided a version of this credit line is used: "Reprinted by permission from IOWA TRANSPARENCY NEWSLETTER, a monthly newsletter of Public Interest Institute."

The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and not necessarily those of Public Interest Institute.

If you have an article you believe is worth sharing, please send it to us. All or a portion of your article may be used. The articles in this publication are brought to you in the interest of a better-informed citizenry, because IDEAS DO MATTER.

We invite you to:
CALL us at 319-385-3462
FAX to 319-385-3799
E-MAIL to Public.Interest.Institute@LimitedGovernment.org
VISIT our Website at
www.IowaTransparency.org
WRITE us at our address on page 4

Copyright 2010

many hours week after week and year after year.

Interesting.... So, the only reasoning I can come up with why we don't hire additional staff is that we don't want to pay benefits to these workers. Governor Chet Culver defends the benefits of the state employees.⁸ In a May 2010 policy study that Public Interest Institute put out early this year, "The Benefits of the Privileged Class," state government employees who work in the Executive Branch and are single, have their entire healthcare, dental, life, and long-term disability completely paid for.⁹ I could be wrong but I think having people employed and working is supposed to be the goal of the state — NOT paying some employees an inflated salary.

Just one of the potential issues with the high salaries paid to employees is the retirement funds for the state of Iowa. As you can see from Table 2, these employees have been receiving this wage for several years. If one of the top ten paid employees chooses to retire, then he or she would be entitled to retirement benefits at this level of wages that he or she has received. I believe this sets a bad precedent for the state. This will put a strain on the retirement funds. This is not exactly how you want your tax dollars being spent, but this information is quite intriguing and a lot of food to consider and ponder.

The second link we have added

is the link for Follow the Money (<http://www.followthemoney.org>). This website was created by the National Institute on Money in State Politics. It is a "nonpartisan, nonprofit organization revealing the influence of campaign money on state-level elections and public policy in all 50 states."¹⁰ This website is designed to encourage more transparency of campaign contributions by the public.¹¹

By clicking on the **Explorer** tab, you can choose **State Overview**. Once you choose **Iowa** for **2010**, you then can click on the **Candidates** tab. This will provide you with a list of all candidates who have run for office during this election cycle. By clicking on any candidate you can see everyone who has contributed to his or her campaign based on the reports filed so far. You will also know if a candidate is behind in filing reports on campaign disclosure.¹²

If you choose a specific donor and click on that name, you then see details about all the candidates who this person or organization has given money to during this campaign cycle. So, if you are a member of say, the Iowa Bankers Association, you can choose this organization and see all the candidates that it has donated money to and the amounts that each candidate has received.¹³

You may wonder why I feel that this website is so important. If so, then think about all

Table 1 - Top Ten State Employees Who Received Highest Overtime Pay

Name	Position	Department	Amount of Overtime	Hourly Wage	Total Salary for 2009
Martha Hunzinger	Psychiatric Nursing Asst 1	University of Iowa	\$54,981.60	\$17.32	\$95,626.00
Chris Jensen	Resident Treatment Worker	Human Services	\$52,944.80	\$20.20	\$103,424.00
Raymond Hansen	Resident Treatment Worker	Human Services	\$52,489.60	\$17.22	\$91,646.00
Judy Curtis-Nelson	Resident Treatment Worker	Human Services	\$43,839.60	\$20.20	\$89,512.60
Sheri Frahm	Resident Treatment Worker	Veterans Home	\$42,809.60	\$20.20	\$90,802.40
Kathleen Blair	Resident Treatment Worker	Human Services	\$42,596.20	\$20.20	\$87,579.80
Lloyd Needham	Resident Treatment Worker	Human Services	\$40,754.20	\$20.20	\$86,535.90
Melanie Hittlet	Resident Treatment Worker	Veterans Home	\$40,045.40	\$20.20	\$83,851.70
Richard Fessler	Resident Treatment Worker	Human Services	\$37,801.30	\$18.71	\$79,068.30
Roger Davidson	Resident Treatment Worker	Human Services	\$37,770.20	\$20.20	\$86,328.30

Source: *The Des Moines Register* State Salary Website

<http://www.desmoinesregister.com/article/99999999/NEWS10/41209004/State-Salary-Database>

the organizations that you give money to or belong to through membership dues. These are the organizations that are giving money to all levels of candidates in our state. It is important to know how those organizations are using your money. I recently was disappointed with the endorsements of an organization that I belong to; if I had seen that it was also giving money to the candidates whom I didn't support, it would cause me to rethink my membership with this organization.

This website has many different features that allow a user to

explore all different aspects of campaign contributions. You can see the top 10,000 donors to state and federal political campaigns, see what recipients of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act contracts donated to state-level political campaigns, find out about campaign finances at your district level, and look at a donation timeline to see how donations relate to current events that are happening.¹⁴ This is just the start of the many features this website has to offer a visitor.

As you can see, both of these websites have a lot of useful in-

formation for the average citizen to check out. It is important to sort through the data that is out there because the government isn't always willing to make that information easy to access and understand. So, take the time to educate yourself with both of these websites. You will be glad you did take a ride on the information superhighway!

Endnotes

¹⁴State of Iowa Overtime and Comp Time Database, *DesMoinesRegister.com*, <http://data.desmoinesregister.com/results/index.php?info=ia_state_overtime_comp> (October 13, 2010).

²ibid.

Table 2 - 2009 Top Ten Overtime Paid Employees Salary for 2005-2009

Name	Total Salary for 2005	Total Salary for 2006	Total Salary for 2007	Total Salary for 2008	Total Salary for 2009
Martha Hunzinger	\$54,074.06	\$47,431.49	\$76,121.40	\$93,023.39	\$95,625.90
Chris Jensen	\$90,630.70	\$80,768.81	\$81,098.45	\$94,502.44	\$103,424.00
Raymond Hansen	\$51,390.73	\$62,224.16	\$75,388.07	\$88,697.97	\$91,646.00
Judy Curtis-Nelson	\$64,803.40	\$66,978.44	\$78,404.28	\$81,095.20	\$89,512.60
Sheri Frahm	\$62,513.93	\$71,099.13	\$71,087.51	\$82,474.29	\$90,802.40
Kathleen Blair	\$57,962.98	\$58,992.88	\$71,433.10	\$78,136.80	\$87,579.80
Lloyd Needham	\$46,251.13	\$45,043.36	\$59,406.06	\$62,477.71	\$86,535.90
Melanie Hittlet	\$59,822.71	\$69,274.40	\$80,841.66	\$82,113.37	\$83,851.70
Richard Fessler	\$60,166.02	\$59,675.03	\$66,936.81	\$70,773.92	\$79,068.30
Roger Davidson	\$44,389.79	\$50,634.11	\$55,972.22	\$75,424.94	\$86,328.30

Source: The Iowa Legislature - Legislative Services Agency

<http://www.legis.state.ia.us/Fiscal/salbook/>

**Public Interest Institute
at Iowa Wesleyan College
600 North Jackson Street
Mt. Pleasant, IA 52641**

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
MAILED FROM ZIP CODE 52761
PERMIT NO. 338

³Resident Treatment Worker salary information, Iowa Department of Administrative Services, <<https://www.iowaonline.state.ia.us/idopapptrack/ICPJobClassDisplay.asp?classcd=03201>> (October 13, 2010).

⁴Ibid.

⁵State of Iowa Overtime and Comp Time Database, search of all employee in reverse order of top paid employees, *DesMoinesRegister.com*, <http://data.desmoinesregister.com/results/index.php?info=ia_state_overtime_comp&BRSR=0&sort=ot_expenses&desc=desc&fy=2009&department=&last_name=&first_name=&middle_name=&job_class=> (October 15, 2010).

⁶Job Description of Residential Treatment Worker, Iowa Department of Administrative Services, <http://das.hre.iowa.gov/html_documents/job_descriptions/JobSpecs/ResidentTreatmentWorker-03201.htm> (October 14, 2010).

⁷State Employee Salary Data, Search of 2009 Salaries of Human Services – Woodward, *DesMoinesRegister.com*,

<http://data.desmoinesregister.com/results/index.php?info=State_Salaries&BRSR=0&sort=TotalSalaryFY05&desc=desc&FiscalYear=2009&Name=&Department=Human+Services+-+Woodward&Position=&County=> (October 15, 2010).

⁸Jennifer Jacobs, “Culver defends free health care, pay increases for state employees,” *DesMoinesRegister.com*, <<http://blogs.desmoinesregister.com/dmr/index.php/2010/10/11/culver-defends-free-health-care-pay-increases-for-state-employees/>> (October 15, 2010).

⁹Amy Frantz, “The Benefits of the Privileged Class,” May 2010, Public Interest Institute, <<http://www.limitedgovernment.org/publications/pubs/studies/ps-10-3.pdf>> (October 15, 2010).

¹⁰“About the Institute: Mission & History,” *Follow the Money*, <<http://www.followthemoney.org/Institute/index.phtml?PHPSESSID=a4daf5af3a27ba1ff4971562ed9bdf0b>> (October 15, 2010).

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Iowa 2010 Candidates, *Follow the Money*, <http://www.followthemoney.org/database/StateGlance/state_candidates.phtml?s=IA&y=2010> (October 15, 2010).

¹³“Explore: Tools and Features,” *Follow the Money*, <<http://www.followthemoney.org/database/tools.phtml>> (October 18, 2010).

¹⁴Ibid.

Jennifer L. Crull is an IT Specialist with Public Interest Institute.

Visit our other websites:

www.LimitedGovernment.Org

and

www.IowaVotes.Org