

September 12, 2002
ILR 2001-D

Representative Paul Ray
PO Box 977
Clearfield UT 84089

Subject: Highway Patrol Salary Comparison

Representative Ray:

At your request, we have compiled information on highway patrol trooper salaries and benefits from other western states and compared them with the equivalent position in Utah. It is our opinion that salaries and total compensation for Utah Highway Patrol (UHP) troopers are low when compared to salaries and total compensation for the same positions in other states. We looked at salary and benefits because a comparison of salaries only does not portray an accurate picture of compensation. Salary is the largest and most visible component of compensation and the part that usually gets the most attention, but benefits are real costs and they would have to be paid by the employee if the employer didn't pay for them. Benefits are equally as important to the employer as salaries are to the employee.

This finding, that salaries and total compensation for troopers are low, supports our position taken in our report ILR 2000-C **Compensation Practices** issued in September 2000. In this report we stated that compensation for UHP troopers was 4 to 8 percent lower than the next three largest law enforcement agencies in the state. At the time, we did not compare troopers' compensation with comparable positions in other states because the state Division of Human Resource Management (DHRM) is required by statute to use market comparability studies with other in-state agencies only. They do not go out of state for their compensation analysis of law enforcement agencies. However, we feel that troopers' compensation is low whether the comparison is made between in-state law

enforcement agencies or between different states Highway Patrol agencies, as indicated by the following figure.

Comparison of Salary and Benefits for Entry Level Highway Patrol Troopers.

State	Starting Salaries			Estimated Benefits		Total Annual Compensation
	Hourly	Monthly	Annual	% of Salary	Dollar Value	
Washington	\$18.21	\$3,156	\$37,877	26.98%	\$10,219	\$48,096
Oregon	17.69	3,066	36,795	37.00	13,614	50,409
Arizona	16.66	2,888	34,653	20.15	6,983	41,635
Idaho	16.66	2,888	34,653	27.00	9,356	44,009
Colorado	16.46	2,853	34,237	25.36	8,682	42,919
Nevada	16.22	2,811	33,738	35.00	11,808	45,546
Wyoming	15.69	2,720	32,635	28.00	9,138	41,773
New Mexico	14.42	2,499	29,994	27.80	8,338	38,332
Montana	12.77	2,213	26,562	36.00	9,562	36,124
Utah	12.37	2,144	25,730	49.40	12,710	38,440
Average	\$15.72	\$2,724	\$32,687	31.27%	\$10,221	\$42,908
Average (excluding Utah)	\$16.09	\$2,788	\$33,460	29.26%	\$9,790	\$43,250

Note: Utah's salary figures do not take into account the legislative appropriations for UHP salaries during the 2001 general session.

The above figure shows salaries and estimated benefits of entry level highway patrol trooper positions in Utah and nine other western states. This is the most prevalent position within state highway patrol agencies, the position that typically encompasses more than 50 percent of the sworn officers in each agency. As shown above, the starting salary for Utah troopers of \$12.37 per hour, is the lowest of the ten western states. It is \$3.72 per hour lower (more than 30 percent) than the average of the other states. The salary range for this position has sixteen steps and goes from \$12.37 to \$19.63 per hour. Because of the limited time and scope of our review, we chose to compare only the starting salaries for this

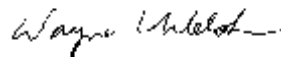
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position.

Also shown in the figure on Page 2 is the total estimated benefits as a percentage of salary. UHP troopers rank highest of the western states with the benefits comparison. The retirement plan is estimated to be nearly 24 percent of salary, which is much higher than in other states, and the health plan is estimated to be nearly 15 percent of salary. The Legislature made a concerted effort to channel compensation into these benefits rather than salary because benefits are an important concern and also they are non-taxable. Even so, when estimated benefits are added into the analysis, UHP troopers' starting compensation ranks seventh out of ten western states. The estimated dollar value of the total compensation is more than 11 percent less than the other states. This amounts to about \$4,800 on an annual basis.

Comparing total compensation is a difficult task. Consideration must be given to the fact that benefit packages are as complex and diverse as the many organizations that use them. Compensation analysis can be problematical because those conducting the analysis may have differing interests depending on whom they represent. There is no consensus as to the best way to address compensation, but it is generally agreed that there should be a balance between salaries and benefits that is mutually acceptable to the employer and the employees. A compensation package that places a heavy weight on salary but neglects the employee benefits will not work well for all employees. Likewise, compensation that is overweighted with benefits but provides inadequate salary will not be satisfactory either. Because the Legislature provides the funding for salaries and benefits, they are concerned with the costs of total compensation. It is our opinion that the Legislature must consider the total compensation package (including benefits and pay) rather than consider a salary-only view.

We hope this letter provides you with the information you need and adequately responds to your concerns regarding compensation for UHP troopers. If you have any other questions or need additional information, please contact us.



Sincerely,

Wayne L. Welsh
Auditor General

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