

Budget 2017: Public employee compensation

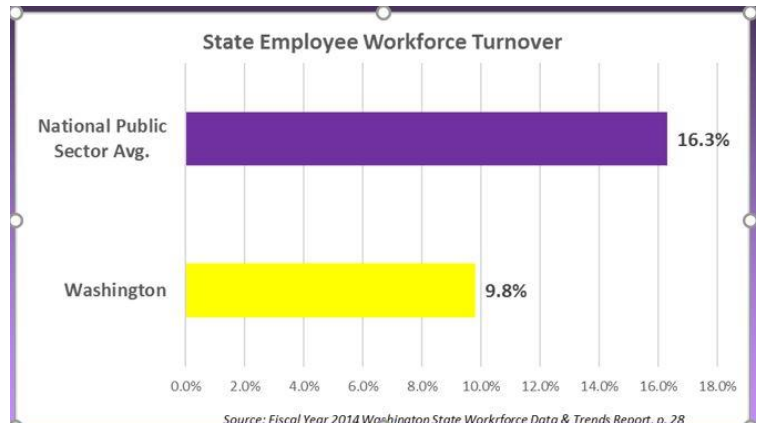


WASHINGTON STATE SENATE MAJORITY COALITION CAUCUS

A smarter approach to public-employee compensation

Budgets are a reflection of priorities. Where the governor's proposal places priority on pay increases for unionized state employees, the Senate budget reflects the MCC goal of protecting the state's most vulnerable citizens.

The Senate budget rejects most of the collective-bargaining agreements negotiated last year by the governor and public-employee unions. Yet it recognizes the important contribution of the state's front-line workers. The Senate plan gives the largest-percentage raises to the workers who need them the most: those toward the lower end of the pay scale.



Employee retention is often cited as justification for large-scale pay increases. Yet turnover in Washington is much lower than the national average.

Agreements are costly

- **The new collective-bargaining agreements are the most expensive in state history** -- \$1.7 billion total cost over four years. That's more than the state provides for the University of Washington and Washington State University, or the cost of lowering K-3 class sizes from 25 students to 17.
- **More than half the state workforce would see double-digit percentage increases**, when step increases are included.

A troubling process

- Labor agreements are negotiated behind closed doors, out of public view.
- Lawmakers have no say – they can decide only whether to fund agreements in the budget.
- Agreements provide retroactive pay increases, in violation of the state constitution.
- Home-care worker agreement makes it difficult for workers to “opt out” of membership in SEIU Local 775 – they must choose during a 15-day window.

The Senate proposal frees up money for high-priority programs, while providing a more reasonable increase in compensation. The Senate plan:

- Funds collective-bargaining agreements where employee retention is a problem – the Washington State Patrol and the Department of Corrections.
- Rejects collective-bargaining agreements for other employees. Instead, the Senate plan would:
 - Maintain current health benefits.
 - Fully fund step increases (5 percent annually during employees' first five years).
 - Provide \$1,000 pay raises to all state-agency and higher-education employees.
 - Provide a 4-percent pay increase for home-care workers, maintain their health benefits and require the Department of Social and Health Services to coordinate training programs.