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On behalf of the State Civil Service Commission, I would like to take the opportunity to address the recent WBRZ News Investigation which aired on Wednesday, March 16, 2022, titled "Top three state agency officers get lucrative raises."

The Commission is fully aware of these pay increases and stands firmly behind the State Civil Service Director's decision to grant such payments. These payments were made in accordance with the Civil Service Rules and aimed to retain staff that serve mission critical roles within State Civil Service. The Civil Service Rules were written with transparency in mind so that the public has access to accurate information.

During the interview filmed last month, the report drew a parallel between the payments granted by the Director and those made to employees at the Office of Motor Vehicles in the past. The report left viewers with the impression that the OMV payments were rescinded by the Director resulting in the employees' reduction in pay. The televised story omitted the Director's explanation of how OMV worked with State Civil Service and the Commission to ultimately provide the adequate justification for these payments. After reviewing the justification, the payments were approved by the Commission and the OMV employees did not incur a reduction in pay.

Additionally, the news story did not state the rational business reasons which were provided for the pay increases granted to Mr. Deer and Mrs. Tucker. A review of the documentation provided in response to the Public Records Requests shows that of the pay increases referenced for these individuals, the majority were associated with promotional pay, a general increase, and market adjustments. All eligible classified employees, including employees of the Department of State Civil Service, have the opportunity to receive market adjustments annually as well as other pay adjustments as applicable. Furthermore, the report provided no background on critical roles, scope and complexity of job duties, and additional responsibilities these employees assumed during the timeframe referenced.

In regards to Director Decoteau's salary increase, the Commission, as his Appointing Authority, considered and unanimously approved an increase in pay based upon the Director's job duties, performance, and market rates for comparable jobs in both state government and private industry. The Director's salary, along with all classified employee salaries, is bound by the classification pay plan, which has a finite maximum of pay. The Commission acted within its authority in amending the agenda to add the item and approve the pay increase following an executive session, which was posted on the regular agenda. We stand by our decision.

The Commission is and remains dedicated to the classified workforce of Louisiana state government. We provide a variety of flexible pay options for agencies to use in recruiting and retaining an effective workforce. Our monthly Commission meetings illustrate that we continue to work with state agencies in raising starting salaries and providing pay increases to classified employees. State government finds itself in an unprecedented labor market. We are committed to working with stakeholders to find innovative ways to provide competitive compensation for all classified state employees.

The Commission reiterates that we support the pay decisions made by Director Decoteau to retain his subordinates. Likewise, we reiterate our support for the classified workforce as a whole, as demonstrated by our frequent consideration and approval of pay requests that come to the Commission monthly from appointing authorities desiring to hire and retain qualified, hard-working employees and to fairly compensate them for promotions, performance of extra duties, and exceptional performance.

Transparency will always be key, but it is a two-way street. It is our hope that this response will allow the public to receive a fair and balanced report rather than a sensationalized narrative.

Respectfully,

David L. Duplantier
Chairman
State Civil Service Commission