

Report of  
County Elected Officials' Salary Commission  
2011

Acknowledge Joint Local Government Committee Chairs and Members

Senate Chair - Honorable Joyce Foster

House Chair - Honorable Laura Bradford

Commission Members :

Appointed by the House

Linda Romer Todd -Public Member- Chair

Robert Fowler – Otero County Coroner

Dee Ann Stults – Yuma County Treasurer

Warren Ward – Grand County Surveyor

Susan Good – DHS Category I Counties

\_\_\_\_\_ – General Public Member

Appointed by the Senate

Thomas Davidson - County Commissioner

\_\_\_\_\_ - County Assessor

Joseph Pelle – Boulder County Sheriff

Teak Simonton – Eagle County Clerk/Recorder

\_\_\_\_\_ – Category II-V Member

\_\_\_\_\_ - General Public Member

Bruce Eisenhauer – Appointed by DOLA Executive Director

Bret Hillberry – DOLA Staff to Commission

We are before you today to present our report of the County Elected Officials Salary Commission.

First, we thank the current and former Senate President and current and former Speaker of the House for our appointments to the Commission.

Second, it has been my pleasure to serve as Chair with the honorable, passionate, committed members of this Commission who have well represented all counties in their respective elected positions and the public. I also thank Bret Hillberry of DOLA who has done a fantastic job of keeping us informed and collecting our data.

The job of the commission is to assist you. The political, sensitive issue of setting salaries was to have become less sensitive with the formation of this Commission. I can assure you that is not the case. We are before you today to engage in a conversation about the data we have compiled so you can make a good decision in setting county elected officials salaries in the future. And January 2013 is the time to make that decision.

The charge of the the Commission is very specific in Section 30-3-105 as passed in SB 05-188. It states:

The Commission shall study

- a. Salaries paid to county elected officials
- b. The responsibilities of each elected official and the scope of authority of the entity in which the official serves
- c. The relative level of difficulty in performing those duties
- d. The amount of time, directly or indirectly, related to the performance of duties, function and services of each county elected official
- e. Current levels of salaries for comparable employment in other places of public and private employment in comparable labor markets.

Today, in our report we do not have a specific recommendation for any salary increases. We are here to share with you the discussions we have had and to recommend when the County Elected Officials salaries should be set. Our task has not been an easy one. We all know elected officials seeking reelection may be reluctant to request salary increases for county elected officials even though these increases come from county, not state, budgets. However, it is our hope that the evidence we are presenting will clearly support the need and fairness for increases for future terms. In 2005, the County Commissioners asked the Legislature to form a Salary Commission and the Legislature acted with SB 05-188. We have taken our charge seriously and come to you to further our discussion. We have thoroughly discussed many options of how much, when, why, or why not.

The collected data is in your packets. In 2010, the Legislature approved the process that the Salary Commission shall bring recommendations to the Legislature in odd (non election) years. We appreciate the opportunity to have additional conversations with you. This Commission will be bringing forth a request in January 2013. The salary adjustments approved at that time would not go into effect until January 2015, two years later. This allows counties time to adjust their future budgets.

The Commission recognizes that the economy goes up and down. We also recognize that through the years, county employees have received many upward adjustments while county elected officials pay has remained unchanged. Many county employees earn more than their elected supervisor. To get qualified people to serve in these elected capacities, the salaries must be appropriate. The formula for salary adjustments will always be complicated. With the Legislature being the decision maker, we ask you review the data we bring forth, ask questions of the Commission, and make good decisions for the benefit of all counties.

County Commissioners who have spoken to Commission members have said they would prefer small increments on a regular basis rather than large increases every now and then. If a salary increase goes into effect in 2015, that will be the only raise in salaries in eight years for most counties and twelve years for a few. If the Legislature fails to act in 2013, the time will be extended to twelve and sixteen years while other county and comparable position salaries continue to rise and subsequently the gap becomes even greater.

January 2013 is the time for the Legislature to act on the Salary Commission recommendation. The spread between what elected county officials are paid and the greater amount other county employees are being paid is growing. This is causing fewer qualified citizens to step up and run for office. Counties have historically increased the salaries of county employees. The attached data shows examples of counties increases in employee pay.

It is important to note that this request will have no fiscal note to the State.

Our job as the Salary Commission may never be finished, but we have gathered the data, analyzed it, and look forward to bringing our recommendations forward in 2013.

I ask my fellow Commission members to comment, and then we are willing to answer questions.

