

Gary Spackman, Director of IDWR, testimony to the Legislative CEC Committee, January 15, 2018

Today, I want to briefly share three stories of employee compensation and retention. All of these stories do not have a happy ending. Some do.

Last week, two of my colleagues employed by the Idaho Department of Water Resources submitted resignations. Each of these employees spoke of departing with a heavy heart. One is leaving for a job Yakima, WA with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. She will be working in a water rights capacity and the job summary describes some supervisory responsibility. She will also receive a substantial increase in pay. The Idaho Dept. of Water Resources could not compete with the job offer, either in responsibility or in pay.

The other person who resigned is leaving to work for the Idaho State Dept. of Labor.

Last spring, another employee of the Idaho Department of Water Resources received a job offer from the City of Boise. She was contemplating switching jobs. We had identified this employee as a productive and important employee for future management in IDWR's succession planning. She is a licensed geologist.

The employee had received a favorable employee evaluation and, in the spring, an increase in pay following last year's approved CEC appropriation. Her supervisor and other managers in the management chain recognized the void her departure would create. Because of the additional money appropriated by the legislature in 2017, IDWR was able to grant the employee a substantial retention bonus. Granting the bonus also created an opportunity for management to generally explain to the employee her expected role in future management succession as older employees retire or are promoted. As a result, we retained what I would characterize as a lynch-pin employee for our core water right processes.

Finally, I recently tromped around the hills with one of my fellow Water Resources employees trying to find chukars. The employee I hunted with has five stellar attributes: First, he is a very competent hydrogeologist. Second, his work ethic is impeccable. He always takes on more and more responsibility without complaining. Third, he loves field work. Sometimes these folks are hard to find. Many want to sit in an office. Fourth, when there is a controversy, I know I can assign him a diplomatic role in the affray, and he will find a solution with minimal animosity, usually with people feeling good about themselves and those with whom there is a controversy. And fifth, if you shoot an elk in a deep, dark hole in the middle of nowhere, he is the guy who will always show up to haul a quarter or two out on his back without complaining. And that is one reason why I won't give you his name. I don't want to increase the number of people who call him to pack out.

Because he drove his vehicle, at the end of our hunting trip, I offered him gas money. He was reluctant. I told him things were probably tighter at his household than mine. He rubbed the folded bills together a couple of times and placed the money at the head of the gearshift knob. He softly said, "You have no idea." I had an inkling of the financial difficulties he had confronted over the past year. He then voluntarily expressed his appreciation for the pay increase and the substantial bonus he had received during the spring of 2017 that had carried him through some difficult times.

We don't distribute the cream to everyone. But when I have employees like the one I just described, the combination of worthwhile work product, association with great people, and the ability to compensate those who deserve compensation endears employees and management to each other and to the good work we do.

Thank you for your appropriation of funds so I can promote our joint commitment to retaining and compensating great state employees.

*Written
Testimony (#11)*
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