

Sample articles from Spring 2000 issue of the Kansas Trooper Magazine

President's Report by Master Trooper Eric Haskin

The Issue Of Pay

Are any of the following statements familiar? **Wait until next year. Not this time. The highway program has priority this year. We're funding increased spending on education this year. This is not the right time to ask for a raise. How many times have we heard these and other reasons for not giving Troopers a raise?** How much longer can we maintain moral? We are seeing our agency slip farther and farther behind in the competition to recruit and train those who would support us through this new millennium.

We have been told that we shouldn't be comparing our salaries and benefits to the large municipal departments in the state, that parity at that level is not possible. With that in mind, I started searching some of the local newspapers in western Kansas where I live. I located a help wanted ad in one of those papers from a relatively small department in the far western part of the state. Their starting salary range is \$26,438 to \$37,114 annually. Their benefit package includes fully paid family health insurance and pay incentives for college hours, military police service, prior law enforcement experience and bilingual skills. It's not just the large municipal departments that have left us behind.

This police department in a rural area of the state can offer a wage and benefit package worth \$4000 a year more than the highway patrol can pay a recruit Trooper.

Rather than being an anomaly this situation is becoming the norm across the state. We are losing the ability to recruit qualified career minded law enforcement applicants to our agency. Applications to law enforcement agencies are down nationwide, and Kansas is no exception. If we hope to maintain our status as one of the premier law enforcement agencies in the country we are going to have to be competitive with other departments in the area of pay and benefits.

It used to be that we couldn't compete with the salaries that other departments were paying their patrol officers. We now find ourselves in a situation where the larger departments in some areas are paying their animal control officers more than a State Trooper. It makes one wonder why someone would be willing to go through 24 weeks of intense training when the reward is going to be substandard pay. Most of us consider it an honor to wear the uniform of the Kansas Highway Patrol, but that doesn't pay the rent or put food on the table. We need more.

With in the next few years there will be a large number of retirements in the highway patrol. How are we going to compete with local agencies that can pay thousands of dollars more per year? We need to offer enough incentive to make someone want to move clear across the state. Often times a job with the highway patrol means the spouse has to leave their job and children have to leave their school. We need to have career opportunities that are sufficient to draw someone away from their local department.

In the last two years the legislatures in Nebraska and Oklahoma have recognized this problem and have given raises that exceed 20 percent. We are now the lowest paid highway patrol in the region by a substantial margin.

We recognize that there are many difficult decisions that must be made with regard to state spending. Our legislators have a tough job trying adequately fund all state agencies, however, this problem with the highway patrol will no go away, and failure to act soon will only exacerbate the situation.

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The X File

Retired Trooper David Mee XK-266

I can't believe it is coming up to four years since I wore the blue uniform of a Trooper. Time moves rather quickly as everyone soon learns.

Brenda and I finished the new house that we started in May of 1996, on the 25 acres that her mom and dad began farming in 1923. We should have done this sooner.

That fall in 1996, I began working part-time for Nemaha County as Assistant Emergency Preparedness Coordinator. In the spring of 1997 I took on the full-time duties of the Coordinator of Emergency Preparedness and Recycling. Subsequently the Transfer Station and Flood Plain position have come under my control. What's wrong with this picture? What happened to "retirement?" The American dream has vanished. I didn't retire, I just changed vocations.

No, I would not trade places with you I like being home before dark, weekends and holidays off, on a regular schedule. Don't misunderstand what I'm saying, because I miss law enforcement work and the many people I worked with, and I hope I will be working with many of them in the future starting in 2001.

Just remember, there is only one job on the highway patrol, the road Trooper. Be proud, and show it.