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I have been a Unit 10 scientist for over 30 years, which means I have experienced what it's like to be respected and compensated fairly, and for the last 17 years, what it's like to be under-compensated and consistently told that I'm expendable. But even after being treated poorly for years, I still maintain my principles and cannot let the harsh treatment I have received compromise my integrity. As a regulator, my entire career has been dedicated to identifying and resolving a wide variety of issues impacting projects, programs and even departments in some cases. However, none of them have been as intractable and baffling to me as the Unit 10 pay issue, which began in 2005 and continues to this day.

Thousands of voices have urged the state to resolve the scientists pay issue. One of the very first voices was your own, or rather, the Department of Personnel Administration (DPA) back in 2006. As you know, DPA was the predecessor to CalHR and the entity that handled most of the responsibilities that you administer now. The state's 2006 Total Compensation Report included a very clear statement about the scientist pay issue, "the State now has severe retention problems in the scientist classes where the duties, responsibilities, and knowledge overlap the engineer classes." The state wasn't wrong in its analysis then and it wouldn't be wrong today as the Unit 10 pay disparity issue continues to impact the ability of scientific programs to recruit and retain the scientific talent the state needs to accomplish its environmental agenda.

The Unit 10 pay disparity has also been called out by the Legislative Analyst Office (LAO), once in 2014 and again in 2018. In those reports the LAO recommended that relationships between supervisors and rank and file staff be maintained, but evidently even the LAO's recommendations aren't enough to compel action.

Current Natural Resources and Cal/EPA agency Secretaries have also analyzed the issue and determined that it's having an impact on their ability to accomplish their missions. As a result, they wrote to you and requested your assistance in addressing it during the current round of contract negotiations. I wonder, do you consider them credible and capable of assessing what they need to be successful in their roles as leaders of the two largest agencies that employ scientists? Will you provide the support they deemed necessary to accomplish their missions?

In addition to the state's own analysis and recommendations to fix it, approximately 40 non-governmental organizations dedicated to environmental and public health causes sent a letter to the Governor in support of fixing the pay issue. They outlined several significant reasons why fixing the pay issue is imperative and how doing so would be a benefit to their organizations, the Governor, and the state as a whole. Does ignoring their request promote the kind of support and cooperation the state desperately needs from their organizations?

Countless excluded and represented state employees have also voiced their desire to fix the pay issue, and it hasn't just been Unit 10 employees. Geologists and engineers from Unit 9, including supervisors and managers, have also written to you requesting that our salaries be restored to reflect the pay relationships that were in place for over 20 years prior to 2005. Unit 9 members, many of whom I work with on a daily basis, have expressed their disbelief over how state scientists have been treated for years and believe the state is marginalizing its scientists. There have been many others, too, including department directors, politicians, members of the public, and the media. All consistent in their messaging that the scientists pay issue is detrimental and needs to be addressed immediately.

How can such a glaring problem that's getting worse over time be allowed to continue?

With all the awareness and heavy toll the pay issue is having on the state's scientific programs, the scientists that run them, and by extension the health of all Californians and its environment, it's unfathomable that it has gone unaddressed for so long. It's quite remarkable really, and my fellow scientists have given up trying to understand how such an egregious and detrimental problem like this can persist year after year. The only rational explanation we have come up with is that the state's departments and systems for identifying and addressing issues like ours are severely dysfunctional and incapable of identifying and resolving them. Confirming this explanation is the fact that there has never been an investigation of the impacts the Unit 10 pay issue is having at the departmental or program level or any response to all the voluminous input provided over the years. How can the state after receiving so much input on an issue that has been repeatedly exposed continue to ignore it and the impacts it's having on the states' ability to accomplish its environmental and public health goals?

Marginalizing the state's scientific workforce and programs is detrimental to all Californians. State scientists find it even more surprising that this issue is happening in California, a state that professes to be a bastion of progressive values and a leader in ensuring those who don't have a voice are treated fairly and equitably. A state that also purportedly relies on and supports science to ensure the health and well being of all Californians, especially those in underserved and disadvantaged communities. If the state doesn't truly respect and support its own scientists, how can it continually claim to support science and be a defender of its citizens when its knowingly compromising its own scientific programs?

State scientists are mission driven and choose public service careers to safeguard the air, water, food, and ecosystems we all depend on. We're still committed to that mission, but we're increasingly less committed to accomplishing it as state employees. When our employer tells us through every successive contract that we aren't worth investing in, then it should be no surprise that more of us are leaving state service to take positions where we will be compensated appropriately and respected for our contributions. Therefore, I ask you, will you honor your own mission statement and "provide exceptional human resources leadership and services with integrity, respect and accountability to state departments and all current and prospective employees."? Will scientists finally be treated in a manner consistent with this mission statement?

Does the State sincerely want to continue failing its scientific workforce, and the public at large? Is Governor Newsom being honest when he talks about supporting science, equity, fairness, and standing up for those who don't have a voice? Or are his words just political soundbites used to burnish his image as a leader that cares about people and the environment? My fellow scientists sincerely hope that he is trustworthy and will finally put an end to this egregious pay issue that has never benefitted anyone.

This administration will make a critical decision that will set the course for science in California. As this is the first time the Newsom administration is negotiating a contract with CAPS, the outcome will clearly indicate if Governor Newsom is true to his word and committed to supporting science.

The previous administration used money as an excuse and repeatedly claimed that funds weren't sufficient to make the necessary adjustments to rank and file salaries. However, that same administration found the funds to appropriately adjust salaries for Unit 10 supervisors and managers, twice. But it also clearly made a mistake by not adjusting rank and file scientists' salaries at the same time, breaking a long-standing precedent of maintaining standard pay gaps between supervisors and rank and file staff. Pay relationships that were established when Unit 10 was first established in 1984 and in compliance with your own internal salary relationship policy.

Now that the state has a record \$97.5 Billion surplus, will insufficient funds again be cited as a reason for not restoring Unit 10's historical pay relationships? If that's what this administration decides, then all Unit 10 employees will know Governor Newsom is not to be trusted and that his often-repeated support for science, equity, and fairness are just empty words. It will also demonstrate a profound lack of support for protecting the health and well-being of California's citizenry.

My fellow scientists and I urge you to not make this Governor a hypocrite and instead, act on his often-repeated words about "resolving inequities wherever they may exist" and "leading with science" to enhance the lives of all Californians.

Sincerely,

Matthew McCarron

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