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Policies and Benefits



Legislative action on pay, benefits and retirement

When the 82nd Texas Legislature convened in January 2011, there was much speculation that substantial reductions in employee pay and benefits could be among the measures taken to help balance the state's budget. During the next five months there were numerous proposals discussed relating to salaries, longevity pay, health care and retirement. Some ideas, like those requiring greater contributions for state employee health care, would have affected all state employees, while others would have affected certain groups such as those on career ladders or earning longevity pay.

Nevertheless, through a combination of actions, the Legislature completed the challenging task of preparing the state's budget for the upcoming biennium without making significant changes to employee compensation. Not only did the Legislature reject many proposals that would have negatively impacted state employees, in regards to the TDCJ, lawmakers appropriated the additional funds necessary to biennialize the Fiscal Years 2010-11 pay raise for unit-based staff, parole officers and employees of local community supervision and corrections departments.

"It turned out much better than many anticipated," said TDCJ Human Resources Director Jan Thornton. "Sure, you would always like to see our hard-working employees receive pay raises, but that wasn't realistic given the budget situation. Maintaining salaries and benefits in this fiscal environment was an accomplishment in itself."

As is the case with health care plans nationwide, state employees will see some premium increases in plan coverage next year. In any case, all things considered, employee pay and benefits will remain in-

tact, for which Ms. Thornton thanked Governor Perry and the Texas Legislature. She also cited the following items of interest relating to employee health care coverage:

- Premium increases will be as follows: HealthSelect premiums increase by approximately 8%, Community First Health Plans by 6.7%, and Scott & White Health Plans by 4.7%.
- Humana's State of Texas Dental Choice Plan rates will increase by 5%.
- For full-time TDCJ employees, the state will continue to pay 100% of their health premium and 50% of the cost for dependents.
- Beginning September 1, 2011, each plan will pay 100% of coinsurance for preventive care, however, co-pays may still apply.
- Beginning September 1, 2011, eligible children can continue coverage in the Group Benefits Program (GBP) until age 26, regardless of marital status, though members cannot add their married child's spouse or children to GBP coverage. ERS will not automatically drop children who are turning 25 in August from health, dental, or Dependent Term Life Insurance coverage, therefore members will not have to re-enroll these dependents during Annual Enrollment.
- Premium rates for all other benefit options remain the same for Plan Year 2012. ●