

This year during annual in-service you took time to address each one of our classes asking for input on retention, recruitment and morale.

After talking to many employees, both new and senior, Security and Unit Staff, OICs and subordinate staff, I have concluded that the majority agree with my thoughts.

The following is a list of those ideas and concerns.

**1) Results** - While your presence in addressing our classes is appreciated, it was also insulting. Your approach was less than effective and frankly, insulting. From our perspective, this is what we heard: "I'd like you guys to tell me what to do to improve work conditions here, but I don't have time or patience to hear any of you". The "Round Table" discussions, when we were having during All Staff meetings, were the same thing. We'd voice our concerns, but nothing was ever done about it. The lack of results is causing major tension among staff and administration. Attempting to create the illusion that administration cares without actually making any changes causes further decrement in staff morale and is insulting. **Listen to us, don't just act like you hear us.**

**2) Pay** - You said (paraphrasing) "I understand a \$5 raise would make everyone happy. But what happens in a year when you want another raise". Yes. This is correct. The state does not pay us a competitive rate. Minnehaha county, where you were warden a short time ago, has always started at a higher rate. Those who have had the opportunity to move over, like you had, were able to benefit by the higher pay rate and the same benefits package. What's stopping us from going there? The answers vary from person to person. Another point: Costco starts their employees at \$16 an hour. Within 5 years, their rate is up to \$25 an hour. For retail! Recently, we discovered that some fast food restaurants were hiring shift managers at around \$18 an hour. We are in custody of some of the state's most dangerous individuals. We have employees who have been here for 20-30 years and are barely making \$22. In surrounding areas, DOC in Nebraska starts at \$25/hour, Iowa at \$19.50/hour, and Minnesota at \$21/hour. **We would like a competitive rate.**

**3) Benefits** - before this year, the advantage of staying with this job was the Health Care Package, Retirement and PTO accrual. Thanks to our legislation, it's obvious the state employee's health care is a major burden on the state, despite having a multi-million-dollar budget surplus for many years running now. Granted, for many of the younger generation, the benefits are not a concern for them. However, the writing on the wall seems to be clear. They destroyed our healthcare; is our retirement next? We do not have anyone protecting our interests. **Stand up for your employees**

**4) Spending** – Currently DOC has been preoccupied with spending money on area beautification. Some of this, such as the new Health Services area, is understandable and necessary. Others, such as the fence that was put up from Unit C to the Hill Gym, seems like a waste of money that could have been put to better use. This fence is always open, and serves no other purpose than the illusion of security. This money could have been used for something to serve a greater purpose such as training, equipment or even raises. Furthermore, these projects take priority over the physical security of our institution. If there are no escorts available for these projects, OICs will pull from where ever they need in order to fill that hole sacrificing the safety of floor staff. **Invest in your greatest asset, your staff.**

**5) Equipment and training** – Currently we are issued the cheapest, bottom of the line equipment. Our body armor is not up to standards. We have to represent the DOC wearing secondhand body armor that doesn't properly cover our employees. It is ill-fitting or so worn/old it is rendered ineffective. Our community gun belts have the same issues along with not having enough of left/right-handed holsters to accommodate the employees that need them. OIC's have told employees to just use a left-handed belt because they were only transporting an inmate to the other facility. Our instructors tell us that there have been multiple cases of well-trained people using this particular holster and injuring themselves with it. Why would we submit our employees to this? During inservice, so many corners are cut it does not provide confidence for our officers. One example - CPR and first aid took approximately 2 hours to complete. The "refresher" course consisted of watching a few videos then gathering in teams for 10 minutes to practice CPR. **Take pride in your employee's appearance and invest in their safety and training.**

**6) Promotions** – This is probably the biggest issue to our facility's morale right now. It has been common practice for promotions to occur based on nepotism and sycophancy. There have been many people that are extremely qualified for positions that have become available, but they have been pushed aside for your quintessential "yes man" or family/friends. This has caused massive distrust in an already (perceived) incompetent leadership. Adding to the distrust, there have been many instances where OICs have taken advantage of their position by attempting to persuade employees sexually. Many of these instances have been taken to the chain of command only to be completely ignored. The sexual harassment for one individual may stop, but they just move on to the next. Schedules are adjusted so particular OICs can work in the same vicinities as their interest/victims. When advances are not returned, these people suffer by being placed in less desirable posts or something of the sort. We are all aware of who are the worst offenders, hopefully administration is too (and if they are, why has nothing been done?). **Set the example and protect your employees from sexual harassment. Promotions should be skills and education based.**