

Classified and Support Staff Council Report to the KS Board of Regents
February 16, 2011
Submitted by Becki Bohnenblust, K-State Classified Senate and CSSC President

Good afternoon and I appreciate the opportunity to update you on what the Classified and Support Staff Council has been doing since I last spoke with you in September and to answer any questions from the written report presented to you last month.

As stated in the January written report, the CSSC organized the annual "Day on the Hill" on January 25th. Our goal was to meet with as many Legislators as possible to educate the newly elected officials about the classified salary market adjustments and remind the rest, of their commitment made in 2007 with the passing of HB2916. And, to hand deliver a copy of the CSSC position paper of which I have provided a copy for you today.

We had 25 classified and support staff members from across the state participate with each Regents University represented and were pleased to have President Scott from Pittsburg State University join us. We had 40 scheduled appointments, however, by the end of the day our diligent and energetic group had met with about twice that number spreading our message to Legislators in the hallways and commons area.

Now, to put the day in perspective, this was the morning the House Appropriations Committee recommended the 7.5% cut in salary for all state employees. What a day to be in the Capitol! The wind seemed to be knocked right out of our sails with this news, yet we continued on our mission to educate about the importance of salaries, pass out our position paper and politely and with the utmost respect, explain why paying bills from the backs of hard working state employees was not in their best interest.

Toward the end of the day, the classified and support staff Presidents met with the Secretary of Administration – Dennis Taylor – and with the Governors Chief of Staff – David Kensinger. Our meeting with David Kensinger seemed to be the most effective and I believe our message was delivered clearly and in a positive way.

It was important for Mr. Kensinger to hear and pass on to Governor Brownback how the average salary based on the 2009 Workforce Report was \$31,000 and how the market adjustments have made an impact by increasing the average salary based on the 2010 Workforce Report to \$33,500 for Regents classified & support staff. He needed to hear how some employees have not received a salary increase since 2006 except for a COLA in 2008 of 2.5%. He needed to hear about Tim Anderson and how the recommended 7.5% pay cut would impact his family with a current annual salary slightly over \$21,000. Mr. Kensinger needed to hear how difficult it is for state employees to survive paycheck to paycheck with their current incomes. Surviving is not living.

I do want to thank each of you for your part in generating the response to the Appropriations Committee recommendation of the 7.5% pay cut for all state employees. Your response was well received. And, with the advice of Regent Boettcher at a "pizza

and politics" event last fall held at K-State, many constituents wrote to legislators and expressed their concerns about this recommendation.

As you may know, as of February 14, SB16/HB2014 has been amended by the Senate Ways and Means Committee to include the classified salary market adjustments for FY12 and FY13. Well, at least they removed the lapsing of these market adjustments for FY12 and FY13. With a long way to go in this legislative session, a lot can change, however, we are encouraged by their latest action.

The CSS Presidents continue to stay in touch with monthly conference calls and feel this year we have established better collaboration and communication among our Universities. We continue to work with our respective administrators on issues regarding equal vacation leave beginning with the effective date of employment and gather information for a future recommendation on a health care bridge for classified employees which when finalized will be filtered through COBO. At any rate, foundations are being laid for a better tomorrow.

I want to leave you with this: If you recall, when I gave the CSSC report in September, I said that I'm not a very polished speaker and at times am blunt, but I speak from my heart. The message is easy to deliver on behalf of over 4000 classified and support staff members when you are passionate about a cause. There are many state employees who are hurting financially, yet most being of a mid-western upbringing – are to proud to show defeat, to embarrassed to apply for food stamps or reduced meals for their children at school, and will work from sunrise to way past sundown trying to make ends meet. Even though they don't have much, they are willing to help their neighbor – why? – because it is the right thing to do.

I would venture to say that most of the people in this room at some point in their lives have struggled. Everyone has different struggles, it may be with finances, health, relationships or whatever, but at some point lets face it – life hasn't been easy. Do you talk with the state employees around you? Do you know their story? With the busy schedules we keep, it can be hard to get our job done let alone try to crack the shell into the real lives of those we work with, but I challenge you to locate a state employee and find out their story. You might be surprised.

It does not matter if you are an administrator, faculty, unclassified professional or what your title or profession may be; being an advocate for salaries and benefits is easier, when you have walked in their shoes. I know that the BOR does not determine classified staff salaries and that the Legislature does, but I would respectfully ask for your continued support of these issues – why? – because it is the right thing to do!

Thank you.