



A Report on

State Employee Benefits as a Percentage of Total Compensation

April 2016

Report No. 16-703



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Overall Conclusion

The State of Texas provides a comprehensive total compensation package to employees working in state agencies. The average value of the total compensation package for a classified, full-time employee for fiscal year 2015 was \$66,383, or \$31.91 per hour. This is an increase of 9.1 percent compared to two years ago in fiscal year 2013, when the average value of the total compensation package for a classified, full-time employee was \$60,871, or \$29.26 per hour. The two components of the average total compensation package that had the largest percentage increase between fiscal year 2013 and fiscal year 2015 were retirement contributions and health insurance costs paid by the State.

Average Total Compensation
Package for a Classified, Full-time
Employee
\$66,383

Salary - \$43,255 (65.2 percent)
Benefits - \$23,128 (34.8 percent)

The total compensation package for fiscal year 2015 was composed of \$43,255 (65.2 percent) in average annual salary and \$23,128 (34.8 percent) in average annual benefits for a classified, full-time employee. In comparison, other state **and local governments' compensation packages average** 63.7 percent salary and 36.3 percent benefits, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

As part of the total compensation package, State of Texas employees receive both direct compensation, or pay, for time worked, as well as indirect compensation, which includes benefits. (See Appendix 2 for a detailed list of the items in the State's total compensation package.) Quantifiable benefits included in the calculation of the **State's total** compensation package were:

- Employer payroll expenses—includes Social Security and Medicare taxes, **unemployment compensation, and workers' compensation.**
- Paid time off—includes holidays, sick leave, and vacation leave.
- Health insurance.
- Retirement contributions.
- Longevity pay.

The State offered other benefits that were not included in the calculation of the total compensation package. Examples of those benefits were state-paid or state-sponsored professional development and training, state compensatory time, military leave, emergency leave, educational activities leave, volunteer

This project was conducted in accordance with Texas Government Code, Section 654.036.

For more information regarding this report, please contact John Young, Audit Manager, or Lisa Collier, First Assistant State Auditor, at (512) 936-9500.

firefighters and emergency medical services training leave, court-appointed special advocates volunteer leave, wellness leave, and extended sick leave. While the use of those benefits may vary depending upon employee circumstances, they are real and valuable benefits to employees at all levels.

In addition to salary and benefit costs, the State provides employees with other rewards that cannot be easily quantified but provide indirect, real, and valuable benefits. Examples of those rewards include flexible work schedules and employee recognition programs.

Project Objective and Scope

The objective of this project was to identify and determine the estimated value, including salary and benefits, of the compensation package provided to employees of the State of Texas.

The scope of this project included the average annual salary and quantifiable benefits for classified, full-time employees that the State offered in fiscal year 2015, excluding employees at higher education institutions. Quantifiable benefits included in the calculation of the total compensation package were: employer payroll expenses (Social Security and Medicare taxes, unemployment **compensation, and workers' compensation**); **paid time off** (holidays, sick leave, and vacation leave); health insurance; retirement contributions; and longevity pay.

Contents

Detailed Results

Chapter 1	
Employee Benefits as a Percentage of Total Compensation	1

Appendices

Appendix 1	
Objective, Scope, and Methodology	8
Appendix 2	
Details of the Total Compensation Package	9

Detailed Results

Chapter 1

Employee Benefits as a Percentage of Total Compensation

The average value of the total compensation package for a classified, full-time employee for fiscal year 2015 was \$66,383, or \$31.91 per hour. This is an increase of 9.1 percent compared to two years ago in fiscal year 2013, when the average value of the total compensation package for a classified, full-time employee was \$60,871, or \$29.26 per hour. The State's total compensation package for fiscal year 2015 was composed of \$43,255 (65.2 percent) in average annual salary and \$23,128 (34.8 percent) in average annual benefits for a classified, full-time employee. In comparison, other state and local governments' compensation packages average 63.7 percent salary and 36.3 percent benefits, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The average private industry employee, according to the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, has a total compensation package that consists of 69.7 percent salary and 30.3 percent benefits.¹

Total compensation (or total rewards) is a phrase used to describe the complete reward and recognition package that an employee receives. The use of the total compensation package allows the State to attract, motivate, and retain employees. That package includes an employee's base salary, benefits, and other rewards listed in Table 1.

Table 1

The State's Total Compensation Package	
Component	Description
Compensation	Includes all wages and salaries provided to employees.
Benefits	Includes federally mandated programs, such as Social Security and unemployment compensation, as well as core benefits such as health insurance, retirement, and paid time off.
Performance and Recognition	Includes programs that acknowledge or give special attention to outstanding employee actions, efforts, behavior, or performance. These programs may include monetary and non-monetary rewards.
Training and Development	Includes employer-supported opportunities for employees to perform better in their jobs or advance their career or personal goals.
The Work Experience	Includes items that are important to employees and the State but are less tangible than employee pay and benefits. It may include scheduling flexibility and programs to help employees be successful at work and home.

¹ *Employer Costs for Employee Compensation, September 2015, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.*

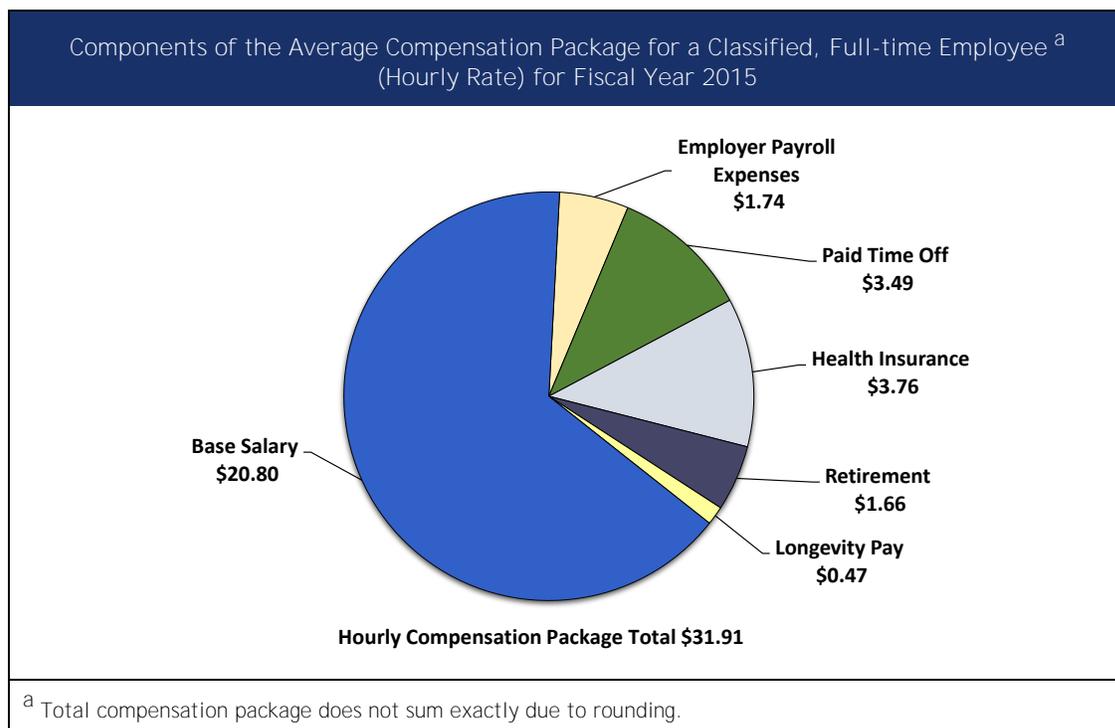
The cost to provide the package represents a significant investment for the State of Texas. In fiscal year 2015, the State spent approximately \$10.3 billion on salaries and benefits for state agency employees (excluding employees at higher education institutions).

For the purposes of this report, the following quantifiable benefits were used to determine the estimated value of the State’s total compensation package:

- Employer payroll expenses—including Social Security and Medicare taxes, unemployment compensation, and workers’ compensation.
- Paid time off—including holidays, sick leave, and vacation leave.
- Health insurance.
- Retirement contributions.
- Longevity pay.

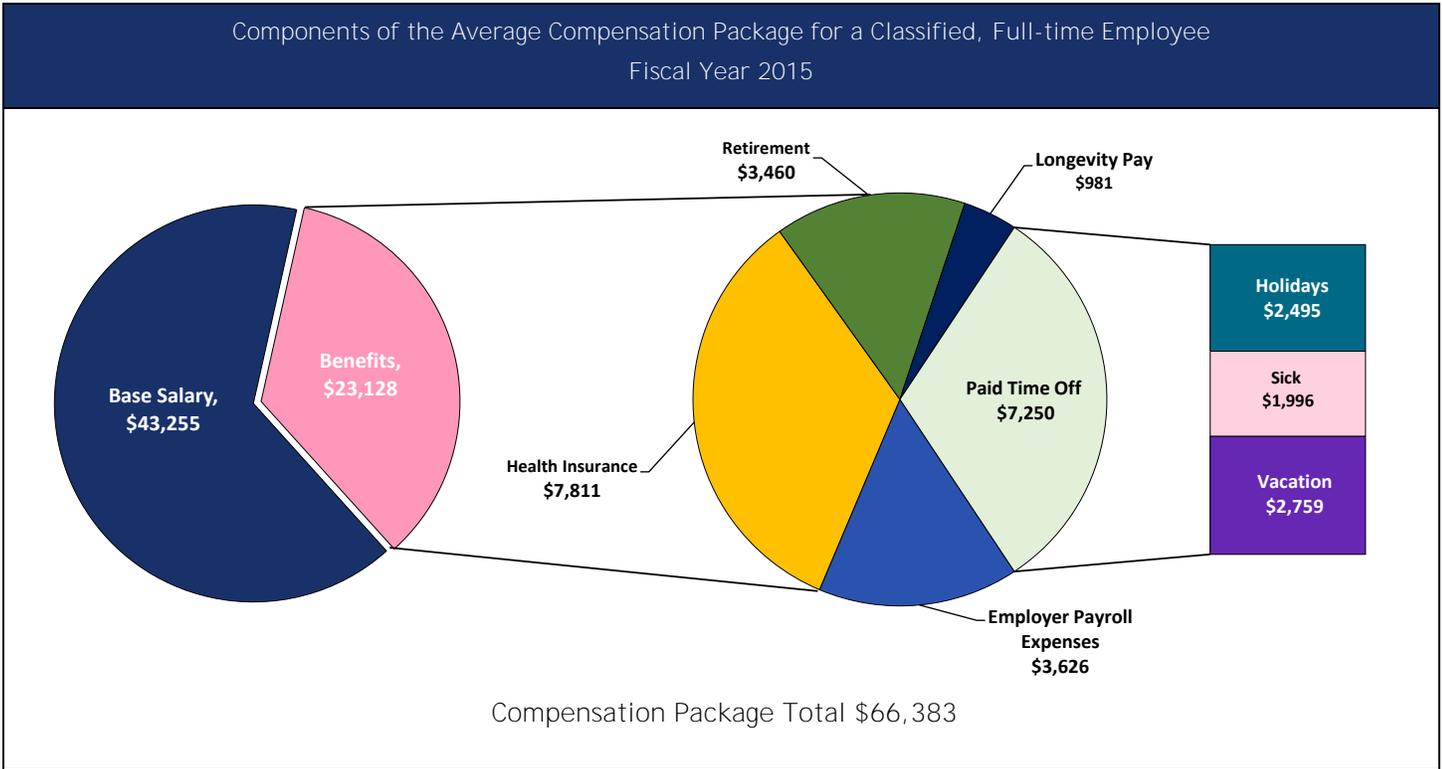
Figure 1 below and Figure 2 on the next page show the breakdown of the State’s total compensation package for fiscal year 2015. The calculations for these figures are based on the average annual salary for classified, full-time state agency employees (excluding employees at higher education institutions).

Figure 1



Sources: Various state agencies and state information systems.

Figure 2

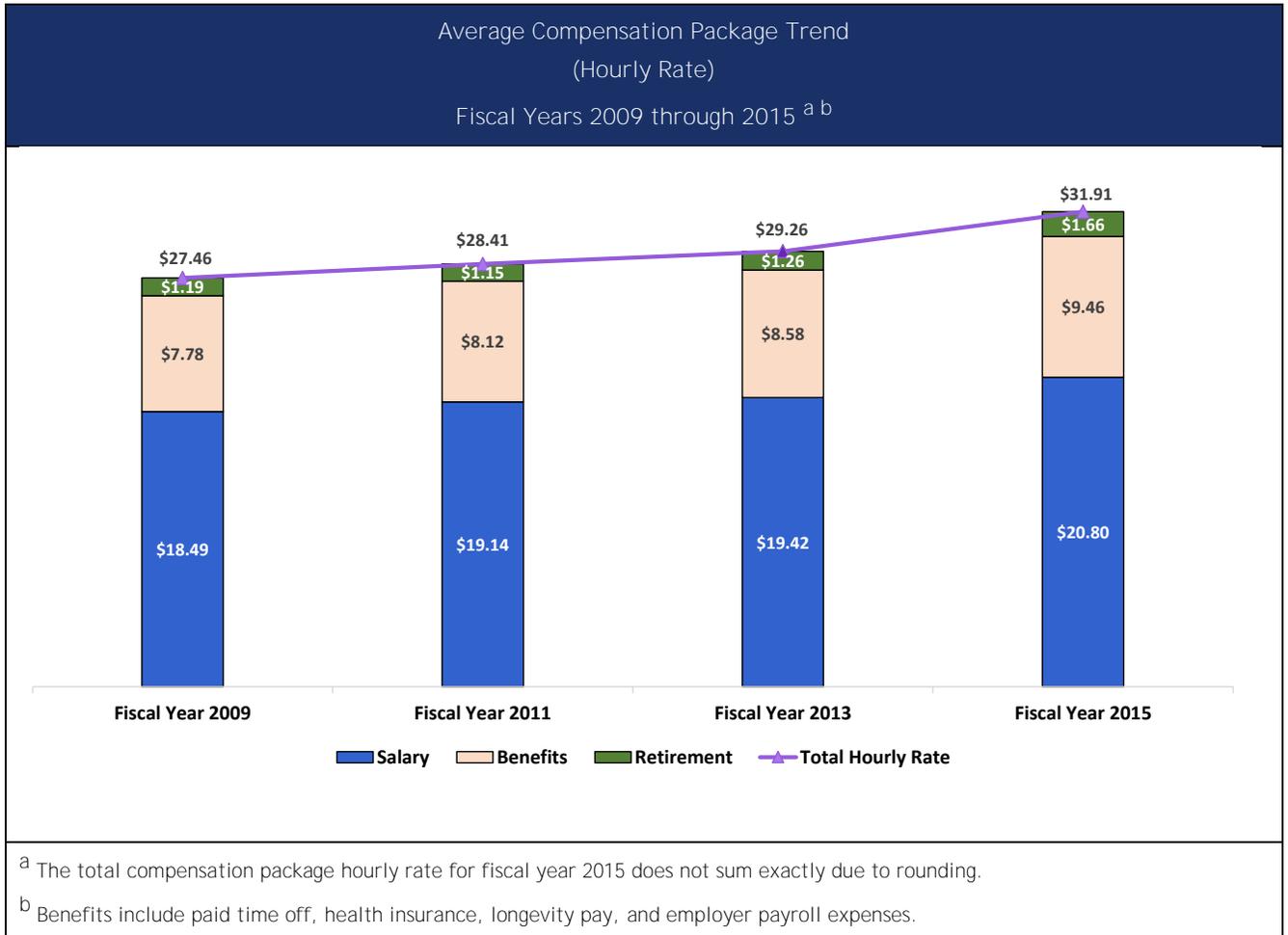


Sources: Various state agencies and state information systems.

Components of the Total Compensation Package

Salary, benefits, and retirement contributions are the three main components of the State's total compensation package. The value of that package has increased by 16.2 percent when compared to fiscal year 2009. Figure 3 on the next page shows the trend (in hourly dollar rates) for average salary, benefits, and retirement contributions for fiscal years 2009 through 2015. (See Appendix 2 for a detailed list of the estimated annual dollar value of each benefit category.)

Figure 3



Sources: Various state agencies and state information systems.

The two components of the average total compensation package that had the largest percentage increase between fiscal year 2013 and fiscal year 2015 were retirement contributions and health insurance costs paid by the State. Retirement contribution costs paid by the State increased by 31.7 percent since fiscal year 2013. Those costs were affected in part by the state contribution rate for retirement increasing to 7.5 percent in fiscal year 2015, from 6.5 percent in fiscal year 2013. In addition, the 83rd Legislature approved a new payroll retirement contribution for fiscal years 2014 and 2015, paid by state agencies to the Employees Retirement System’s retirement program at the rate of 0.5 percent of the base salary for each benefits-eligible employee who is a member of the retirement system.² Additionally, the portion of the benefits presented in Figure 3 above that

² The 84th Legislature also approved that payroll retirement contribution for fiscal years 2016 and 2017.

increased the most was health insurance costs paid by the State, which increased by 12.6 percent since fiscal year 2013.

The average annual salary for a classified, full-time employee in fiscal year 2015 increased 7.1 percent compared to two years ago in fiscal year 2013, caused in part to the employee pay increases approved by the 83rd Legislature.

Table 2 lists the legislatively approved pay increases for state employees.³

Table 2

Legislatively Approved Pay Increases for Classified Employees Fiscal Years 2012 through 2017		
Fiscal Year	Percent Increase	Details
2012	0.0%	No legislative increase was authorized.
2013	0.0%	No legislative increase was authorized.
2014	1.0%	Employees received a 1.0 percent increase or a minimum increase of \$50 per month. Targeted increases for specific positions were also approved.
2015	2.0%	Employees received a 2.0 percent increase or a minimum of \$50 per month.
2016	2.5%	The Legislature authorized a 2.5 percent increase for employees paid in Salary Schedules A, B, and C. Pay increases for certain positions in Salary Schedule C were also approved.
2017	0.0%	No legislative increase was authorized.

Sources: State of Texas Salary Increase History, State Auditor’s Office; the Office of the Comptroller of Public Accounts’ *Guidelines for the Salary Increases for Certain State Employees*; and the General Appropriations Act (84th Legislature).

Salary and Wages

The most visible element of the State’s total compensation package is cash compensation provided to employees for work they perform. Although direct or base pay represents an employee’s normal salary rate, state employees may be eligible for additional forms of compensation. Longevity pay is included in the total compensation calculations. Longevity pay is provided to full-time employees who have at least two years of lifetime service credit.⁴

³ The legislative increases in Table 2 do not reflect other types of pay increases such as promotions, equity adjustments, or merit increases that individual state employees may receive within their respective state agencies.

⁴ Longevity pay is authorized in Texas Government Code, Section 659.043.

In addition to longevity pay, employees may receive additional compensation through performance incentives, on-call pay, salary and educational stipends, benefit replacement pay, or shift differentials. The costs for those additional types of compensation were excluded from the total compensation calculation. Other forms of compensation include recruitment and retention bonuses and hazardous duty pay, the use of which may vary according to the agency because of differing statutory requirements and workforce needs.

Benefits

Benefits are the programs an employer uses to supplement the cash compensation that employees receive. Examples of benefits include federally mandated programs such as Social Security and unemployment compensation, as well as core benefits that satisfy an employee's basic expectations for health insurance and paid time off. The State offers those insurance, income-protection, savings, and retirement programs to provide security for its employees and their families. Specifically:

- **Health Insurance.** Health insurance for most employees is available through the Employees Retirement System. For a full-time employee⁵, the State pays all of the employee's health insurance premium and 50 percent of dependents' health insurance premiums.
- **Other Insurance.** In addition to health insurance, state employees have access to other types of insurance, such as dental, basic term life, optional term life, dependent term life, and short- and long-term disability insurance. Employees can purchase those additional coverages through the group benefits program. The State also offers employees the option of participating in flexible medical savings and dependent care accounts.
- **Employee Leave.** The State provides employees with leave benefits in the form of paid time off for vacation leave, sick leave, and holiday leave. Although there are some restrictions on accruing and using those types of leave, full-time state employees during fiscal year 2015 earned (1) 12 days of sick leave, (2) an average of 17 days of vacation leave, and (3) 15 paid holidays.

In addition to those traditional forms of paid time off, employees may benefit from other types of leave that agencies are required to provide. Examples of the other types of leave include military leave, emergency leave, educational activities leave, parental leave, volunteer firefighters and emergency medical services training leave, state compensatory time, and court-appointed special advocates volunteer leave. Depending on an

⁵ Full-time employees are those employees working 30 hours or more per week.

agency's policies and procedures, employees also may receive extended sick leave and administrative leave. Individual agencies also may provide paid time off for the State's wellness initiatives. Those other types of leave were not included in the calculation of the total compensation package.

- Retirement. The State offers a defined benefit retirement plan (see text box). The defined benefit retirement plan (or defined benefit pension plan) is designed to reward employees who spend the majority of their careers in state service. The 83rd Legislature approved a state retirement contribution rate of 7.5 percent for fiscal years 2014 and 2015, and a new payroll retirement contribution paid by state agencies to the Employees Retirement System's retirement program at the rate of 0.5 percent of the base salary for each benefits-eligible employee who is a member of the retirement system. The employee contribution rates for fiscal years 2014 and 2015 were 6.6 percent and 6.9 percent, respectively.⁶

Defined Benefit Retirement Plan

Under a defined benefit retirement plan, also known as a defined benefit pension plan, the benefit upon retirement is known. The employer bears the financial risk and generally provides higher benefits for employees with longer service.

Source: U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission.

Employees also have the opportunity to contribute to a deferred compensation plan, such as a 401(k) or 457 plan. Those plans can supplement an employee's current state retirement plan. New state agency employees are automatically enrolled in the 401(k) plan at 1 percent of their salary, or they can choose not to participate.

⁶ The 84th Legislature increased the state retirement contribution rate and employee retirement contribution rate to 9.5 percent each for fiscal years 2016 and 2017. It also approved a payroll retirement contribution paid by state agencies to the Employees Retirement System's retirement program at the rate of 0.5 percent of the base salary for each benefits-eligible employee who is a member of the retirement system.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Objective, Scope, and Methodology

The objective of this project was to identify and determine the estimated value, including salary and benefits, of the compensation package provided to employees of the State of Texas.

The scope of this project included the average annual salary and quantifiable benefits for classified, full-time employees that the State offered in fiscal year 2015, excluding employees at higher education institutions. Quantifiable benefits included in the calculation of the State's total compensation package were: employer payroll expenses (Social Security and Medicare taxes, unemployment compensation, and workers' compensation); paid time off (holidays, sick leave, and vacation leave); health insurance; retirement contributions; and longevity pay.

To determine the average value of the total compensation package, the estimated dollar values of the quantifiable benefits were added to the average annual salary for classified, full-time employees. That analysis was prepared from summary information received from the Employees Retirement System, the Texas Workforce Commission, the Office of the Comptroller of Public Accounts, and the State Office of Risk Management.

The information in this report was not subjected to all the tests and confirmations that would be performed in an audit. However, the information in this report was subjected to certain quality control procedures to ensure accuracy.

The following members of the State Auditor's Office staff completed this project:

- Juan R. Sanchez, MPA, CIA, CGAP (Project Manager)
- Kendra Campbell, MSIS, PHR, SHRM-CP
- Sharon K. Schneider, CCP, PHR, SHRM-CP
- George D. Eure, CPA (Quality Control Reviewer)
- John Young, MPAff (Audit Manager)

Details of the Total Compensation Package

Table 3 presents a detailed list of the average value of the State's total compensation package for a classified, full-time employee (not including higher education institutions) for fiscal year 2015.

Table 3

Total Compensation Package Category Details			
Fiscal Year 2015			
Type of Benefit		Estimated Annual Dollar Value	Percentage of Total Compensation
Employer Payroll Expenses	Social Security and Medicare Taxes	\$3,309	
	Unemployment Compensation	\$ 73	
	Workers' Compensation^a	\$ 244	
Total Employer Payroll Expenses		\$ 3,626	5.5%
Paid Time Off	Payment for Holidays	\$2,495	
	Payment for Sick Leave	\$1,996	
	Payment for Vacation Leave	\$2,759	
Total Paid Time Off		\$ 7,250	10.9%
Health Insurance ^b		\$ 7,811	11.8%
Retirement Contributions		\$ 3,460	5.2%
Longevity Pay		\$ 981	1.5%
Total Benefit Cost		\$23,128	34.8% ^c
Average Annual Salary (Classified, Full-time Employee)		\$43,255	65.2%
Total Compensation Package		\$66,383	100.0%
<p>^a This is the average claim cost for employees of General Revenue-funded state agencies who are eligible for workers' compensation. The average claim cost calculation excludes agencies with workforces composed entirely of unclassified employees, agencies that do not participate in the State Office of Risk Management's assessment program, and state active duty personnel.</p> <p>^b This is an average state contribution for all active employees of General Revenue-funded state agencies.</p> <p>^c Percentage does not sum exactly due to rounding.</p>			

Sources: Various state agencies and state information systems.

Copies of this report have been distributed to the following:

Legislative Audit Committee

The Honorable Dan Patrick, Lieutenant Governor, Joint Chair

The Honorable Joe Straus III, Speaker of the House, Joint Chair

The Honorable Jane Nelson, Senate Finance Committee

The Honorable Robert Nichols, Member, Texas Senate

The Honorable John Otto, House Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Dennis Bonnen, House Ways and Means Committee

Office of the Governor

The Honorable Greg Abbott, Governor



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