Division of Research

Frequently Asked Questions

An Overview of the Compensation Commission and its 2021 Report

1. What is the Delaware Compensation Commission?

The Compensation Commission ("Commission") is a non-partisan body that makes salary recommendations for executive, cabinet, legislative, and judicial officers. The Commission is composed of six appointees who are required by law not to hold public office or receive compensation from the State for their duties. The Commission includes the Secretary of the Department of Human Resources, who serves as a nonvoting member.

Delaware's Compensation Commission primarily serves two purposes, which are:

(1) To fairly assess salary data based on a position's requirements, thus removing political viewpoints from the discussion of compensation.

(2) To use a framework that compares salary information within and outside the State to ensure high-quality talent is retained in Delaware's public offices.

2. What are the salary recommendations from the 2021 report?

Two unique circumstances challenged the Commission in their recommendations for 2021. First, the economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Second, the fact the last salary increase was approved by legislators 16 years ago. Therefore, for most Executive and Judicial positions, a phased in four-year increase was suggested to match budget projections. A 2% salary raise was suggested for legislators and an 8% raise for the Governor in 2025. To view the adjustments in their entirety, please see Tables A, B, C, and D in the report found here.

3. What enables the Commission to make budget adjustments?

Chapter 33 of Title 29 of the Delaware Code is the enabling law that authorizes the Commission. The law requires an evaluation of salary data be made by the Commission to keep positions competitive and paid fairly. Every four years a "remuneration study" is released on the first day of session of a new General Assembly and becomes effective by law on July 1 if the General Assembly takes no action in response to the Commission's study within 30 days of the study's release. Legislators have the ability to reject the proposals in the remuneration study through a joint resolution. However, because the General Assembly recesses at the end of January for 5 weeks, it is important that a decision on the Commission's report be made before the recess.

4. How does the assessment process typically work?

Usually, the Commission begins by developing a conceptual framework to guide their decision-making process. For example, the priorities from 2017 focused on transparency in data collection, simplifying branch tiers, and general salary considerations.

Then, the Commission analyzes historic budget information including past allowances, reimbursements, salaries, per diem, and mileage amounts to determine if adjustments should be made.

Additional factors the Commission may look at are:

(a) Agency size (budget and number of employees).

(b) The positions' impact on citizens.

(c) Prevailing economic circumstances.

(d) Comparisons to salaries set by other state governments.