

Councilwoman Debra Ortega, Charter Change Chairperson

This letter is in response to the FOP's recent desire to ask for a change to the rule of 85 for the uniformed members of the Denver Sheriff Department. We agree.

The Denver Sheriff Union, not to be confused with the FOP, has been looking at the uniformed retirement issue for the last 18 months or so. We would like to see the uniformed staff go back to a Rule of 75 and preferably 2% but have not received an estimated cost of this option as of yet.

This process has been slow, almost painfully slow. As Ms. Darlington indicated at your last meeting DERP has 3 tiers that apply to CSA employees;

Tier 1 Rule of 75 and 2% Hired before September 1, 2004 and 36 highest consecutive months

Tier 2 Rule of 75 and 1.5% Hired before July 1, 2011 and 36 highest consecutive months

Tier 3 Rule of 85 and 1.5% Hired on or after July 1, 2011 and 60 highest consecutive months

Tier 1 and Tier 2 Early Retirement – A member may retire early upon reaching age 55 with a minimum of five years credited service

Tier 3 – A member may retire early upon reaching age 60 with a minimum of five years credited service

When we asked the Department of Finance about an estimated cost last year of going from Tier 3 to Tier 1 we were told it would be about 3 million dollars and require an increase to DERP contributions of around 2%. This would be an unfunded mandate, so we were starting to look at various ways this could be funded and once we had enough information, we were going to ask the deputies for their input and approach the Council's Finance and Public Safety Committees. However, since this issue has been brought forth sooner, I don't have all the information I would like available for your review and input.

Attrition Rate and Staffing – The Denver Sheriff Department has always been a stepping stone to other agencies. What is different today is that between people using us as a stepping stone and people retiring we now have one of the higher attrition rates, if not the highest based on informal discussions with other agencies. At one time we had a clearer path for those who wanted to work the streets as they were given preference points should they choose to apply for DPD. If our talent was going to leave, we at least wanted to try to retain them within the city as training is expensive.

Back in the late 80's to early 90's the agency brought several new housing areas online which required hiring many more people than normal. This resulted in a majority of staff having less than 5 years on the job, which in some ways mirrors our staffing today. It has been around 30 years since those buildings were brought online which puts the staff hired at that time, at a rule of 75 retirement, or age 55 which is contributing to our high attrition rate.

Given the nature of our profession and its inherent hazards, we do have people looking at other agencies who recognize that 25-30 years is enough. In this profession it is the cumulative effects of

stress over time that create the physical and mental injuries we sustain in the line of duty to the citizens of the City and County of Denver but workers comp denies.

Hiring – We are having smaller classes for a reason. We have more people who have tried marijuana which is a disqualifier. We can't always wait for a larger class as our need is now, not tomorrow. The agency has taken many steps to help with staffing levels. We attend mandatory in-service on our days off so that we don't pull a bunch of officers off post on a work day. There has been a move to civilianize many positions within the agency that don't require a deputy such as records, TMU, AIU/PID and there are still many more that could be performed by non-uniform staff. However, this also reduces or eliminates positions that would be useful as they provide exposure to duties to higher level functioning positions such as Captains, Majors and Chiefs which helps prepare them for advancement

Based on the numbers provided by Mr. Jackson, the following represent the breakdown of the current workforce as it relates to the various DERP Tiers;

235 – Tier 1

130 – Tier 2

365 – Tier 3

Based on this a full 50% of the agency is on Tier 3 or hired on or after July 1, 2011. This also shows that we are also dealing with a different generational culture of people as many of the new hires are going to be in their 20's. Some studies have mentioned the difficulty with the new generation and how they perceive work, their expectations of work, job satisfaction etc.

I'd also like to respond to some of the questions that you and your fellow Council members asked.

Councilwoman Black

Other options, more money to keep people longer – I understand that in the generally population people are living longer so I can see the reason to increase the retirement age but I don't feel this is appropriate for certain lines of work, such as ours where life expectancy is less. For everyone it will be different but over the course of time we begin to suffer from the cumulative effects of jail and corrections work. Our work is stressful, and several studies and research has shown we have a higher rate of physical and mental injury compared to the general public and law enforcement.

An older workforce in this profession runs the risk of an increase of injuries that are harder to recover from. It is also more likely to be an increase in workers comp expenses as there are more and more studies that do link the long-term cumulative stress of this environment to various health risks, both physical and mental.

I have also been exploring the possibility of bringing a DROP program back to the Sheriff Department as we have many retirements in the next 4-5 years in our supervisor and command ranks. This loss of experience is tremendous and can't be replaced or replicated other than through experience. Most jail work is repetitive and becomes normal for jail and eventually normal and ordinary for the deputy. It's the out of the ordinary events such as a jail riot,

emergency planning, death, murder, epidemic etc. where experience is going to be the only teacher. The loss of experience also leads to the loss of administrative and operational knowledge. When issues come up it's pretty much a given that it's come up before but when all your experience and knowledge base leaves, there will be no one to guide people through the issues and some will be potential lawsuits or issues that are detrimental to the agency.

While more money may entice a person to stay longer and will motivate some, this would be a contract issue and the Denver Sheriff Union would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and any other council member(s) on this. DPD does make more money and they accrue more sick and vacation days than we do. It is felt that we should be somewhat comparable to slightly more accrued time later in our career.

Councilman Flynn

Recruits vs retirement attrition – Numbers need to be provided.

DSD staff transferring to other CSA positions and impact – On the surface it would be a co-mingling of both rules but believe if they went from rule of 75 to rule of 85 job position, the rule of 85 would prevail unless it was a medical disqualification in which case there may be other impacts that may need to be looked at.

Councilman Kashmann

Breakdown of old vs new hires leaving – Numbers need to be provided

Can we keep some for 15-20 years – Short answer is yes but again it will require ordinance and contract changes, maybe even DERP change. The Denver Sheriff Union would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and any other council member(s) on this. Comparable city retention – I'm not sure this is going to be an apples to apples comparison as I don't believe there is any comparable CSA position to obtain comparison too. If we were to take a look at other agencies, it could be a little time consuming to gather the data, probably no more than 4 weeks if not sooner. The deciding factor would be how long it takes to get a response from other agencies.

Councilwoman Ce De Baca

Exit interview and data as to why people are leaving – You will get various answers for this ranging from more money, better work environment, better morale, better policies/procedures, fairer discipline process, better retirement, don't like the job, personality conflicts, don't like shift work, input from co-workers who have left with a current example being Adams County etc.

Incentives to retain people – There are incentives that could be addressed in our contract, ordinance or charter.

Slicing up the 2.7 million based on hire and retire dates – Numbers need to be provided by DERP

Councilwoman Ortega

Violent work environment as reason to leave – For some people yes but many leave and go to other agencies. Our work is violent by nature and a reality of this profession, but other agencies have better policies and consequences which create a better work environment which then impacts morale. Other agencies also seem to have a better understanding of the long-term consequences of this profession based on retirement age and benefits, including disability retirements.

Want the DSD to be fully staffed – Thank you Councilwoman Ortega, staff would very much appreciate that.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration in this matter.

Wayne Jochem,

Denver Sheriff Union