

Oklahoma Senate Committee on Appropriations

2014-15 Performance Report

MERIT PROTECTION COMMISSION

Agency Mission

The Merit Protection Commission is an independent Quasi-judicial agency established to protect the integrity of the state's merit system, utilized by state agencies and their employees. The Commission was created in 1982 by the Oklahoma Personnel Act. The Commission and the division of OMES, formerly known as the Office of Personnel Management, act independently.

Our goals and objectives reflect how our mission is carried out. A brief summary of some of Merit Protection's primary responsibilities are provided below:

- 1) Investigate allegations of abuse in the employment practices of the Administrator(s) of state agencies.
- 2) Investigate allegations of violations of the provisions of the Oklahoma Personnel Act within its jurisdiction.
- 3) Receive and act on complaints, counsel persons and groups on their rights and duties; and take action designed to obtain voluntary compliance with the provisions of the Oklahoma Personnel Act.
- 4) Establish and maintain a statewide Alternative Dispute Resolution program to provide dispute resolution services for state agencies and employees. Actions agreed upon through the Alternative Dispute Resolution program provided by the Commission shall be consistent with applicable laws.
- 5) Establish rules, pursuant to the Administrative Procedures Act, as may be necessary to perform the duties and functions of the Commission. That includes rules to monitor the state's agency grievance process, to ensure full compliance with the law.
- 6) In addition to its original functions, this agency is now responsible for providing training on the grievance process, the appeals process, the steps of Progressive Discipline in state employment, and training for its administrative law judges. Agency functions include a component designed to assist agencies in voluntarily complying with the Oklahoma Personnel Act.

Interim Director

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MERIT PROTECTION COMMISSION

Governance:

The Director is appointed by the Commission. There are nine members of the Commission. The Speaker of the House appoints two members. The President Pro Tempore appoints two members. Five members of the Commission are appointed by the Governor. No more than four appointments of the Governor are from the same political party. Members of the Commission serve staggered terms.

Modernization:

The Merit Protection Commission outsourced IT and accounting functions. The agency recently upgraded its Courtroom technology and upgraded its software. The Commission is appreciative of the assistance we received from the State Chief Information Officer, in achieving this objective. With the upgrades, the agency hopes to expand the use of our courtroom technology to offer training to state employees.

Core Mission:

The agency is not required to provide any services outside of our core mission. We hope to restore funding levels this year to maintain critical staffing levels within our agency in order to carry out our core mission.

Goals for the Upcoming Year:

To expand the use of our courtroom technology to offer increased training opportunities for employees in remote areas of the state.

Savings and Efficiencies Achieved:

The agency continues to operate a cost effect Alternative Resolution Program, which benefits state agencies and employees. Our ADR program offers the parties an opportunity to resolve conflict at the lowest level possible. The administrative hearing process, also provides a very effective way of resolving employment disputes. It is more efficient than resolution in other forums that are more costly to the litigants.