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**A Report on the Lessons Learned from Recent Merit System Losses in California**



Presented to the Board of Directors of the California School Personnel Commissioners' Association  
at their January 26, 2017 meeting.

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## Introduction

I was asked during the CSPCA Annual Conference in 2016 in Anaheim by President Patricia Ridenour to look into the recent loss of merit districts in California. There had been a strategic planning effort by the CSPCA Board of Directors the previous year regarding this topic. To build on that effort, she asked if I could produce a reference document that could be used by merit districts facing similar issues in the future.

In developing this report, I chose to take a “lessons learned” approach. This would not attempt to assess blame on any individual or organization, but rather take the information and report it relating to the issues, not the personalities of any individuals involved.

I hope that this document will be of assistance to both personnel commissioners and personnel directors in the future. This issue, relating to termination of the merit system in a school district, will unfortunately continue at times into the future. This report may be of assistance to personnel commissions so that they can proactively not be placed into such a drastic situation. Conversely, if they are facing a termination effort, this can serve as an informational source as to what are the required procedures and timelines found in the various Education Code sections.

In researching the sections of the Education Code regarding termination, I found no case law cited in any of those sections. In the future, this document can and should be revised, to reflect any court decisions that may take place in the future. Also, if there are additional additions or revisions to the Education Code they should be added as well. This report cites the Section 45000 of the Education Code for elementary and secondary education, but the provisions are the same for community college districts found in Section 88000 of the Education Code.

## Review of May and July 2015 Strategic Planning Sessions on Merit District Losses

In May of 2015, a Strategic Planning Committee was tasked to look at several issues relating to the loss of merit districts throughout California. They also looked at which districts have been lost, who voted them out and why, and finally what has been done to try and bring those districts “back into the fold.”

Much of the discussion centered on the role of the personnel director. The fine line that must be walked between administration and organized labor, is just that, a very fine line. Once one side or the other has lost confidence in the personnel director it can start a downward spiral that will be very difficult to recover from. Sometimes there is a perception and reality issue that is seen from the differing stakeholders of the merit system.

The Strategic Planning Committee identified many issues relating to the personnel director which can lead to potential problems. These include the following:

- a. **Inflexibility** – By definition, there are rules and regulations, laws and past practices that establish tight boundaries which the director should follow to be consistent. Not all issues are as cut and dried as some would like to believe. The intent of rules and regulations sometimes needs to be brought into the process to look at additional ways to resolve an issue that otherwise may not be apparent if no flexibility is used in seeking a solution. In a perfect world, it would be easy to follow the rules to the letter, however we don’t have that luxury in real world applications. Looking at all sides of an issue and understanding various viewpoints is a key to arriving at a satisfactory and acceptable outcome.
- b. **Loss of Trust** – Because of the nature of the merit system, the personnel director must retain neutrality. This must be a bedrock of the personnel director’s actions. You cannot and will not make both sides happy all the time. Once that perception of neutrality is lost by either side, trust and confidence will suffer and ultimately lead to major issues. Because of the neutrality of the position, the personnel director will hear some items and/or information that are in confidence by either management or organized labor. This information must remain confidential and not disclosed to unauthorized persons, period.
- c. **Poor Communications or People Skills** – This needs to be a critical skill identified as part of the hiring process of the personnel director. It should be a critical part of the

evaluation process of the personnel director on at least an annual basis by the personnel commission. Both oral and written communication skills are necessary to communicate effectively to all stakeholders of the merit system. Most of us in our world outside of the merit system have either worked for or worked with individuals that were very smart and knowledgeable in their chosen field, but lacked the people skills necessary to effectively perform in their position. It's a disaster waiting to happen, and it will.

- d. **Lack of Problem Solving Skills** – If the issues in the operation of a merit system were simple and straight forward why you need a director? Just follow the rules and regulations. If it was only that easy. Many issues that are dealt with by personnel directors are solved by pointing out the appropriate sections of the personnel rules and regulations and how they apply to a situation. A large amount of potential issues are addressed in this manner on a fairly regular basis. Think of it as the role of an airline pilot. 99% of the time issues are dealt with following a fairly set list of procedures. The reason they make the big dollars is the 1% of the time where the issue doesn't have a solution that is in the book. The same thing holds with the personnel director, it probably is more than 1% of the time, but there will be issues that need to be dealt with that don't necessarily fall into just following the manual. This is an art that must allow for outside the box thinking to seek satisfactory solutions.
- e. **Predicting Unintended Consequences** – The decisions that personnel directors are involved in and make have long lasting consequences. Labor will always, and rightfully so, look to past practice to justify a position on behalf of an employee. If you have deviated from the rules and regulations, you as a personnel commission had better realize that you are potentially being set up for future consequences that may not what the original intent of the decision was. Tread carefully, being "nice" can come back to bite you.
- f. **Impact of Collective Bargaining in a Merit System** – Understanding what is covered under collective bargaining and what is not is key for the personnel director to understand. The roles and responsibilities in these areas between the governing board and the personnel commission are clear by statute.
- g. **Dual-Hated Personnel Director** – To be truly neutral the personnel director should be paid 100% by the personnel commission. The position is difficult enough by itself to

remain neutral. When the personnel director is split between the school district and personnel commission it will make it very difficult for the personnel director to serve “two masters” and try to keep both happy at the same time.

The Committee, then looked at how the California School Personnel Commissioners’ Association could prevent the future loss of merit systems.

- a. **The Merit Academy** is a perfect vehicle to add instructional material for future personnel directors to look at why merit system districts have failed. We have an opportunity to assist future personnel directors in seeing the lessons learned from failures of past personnel directors and merit systems by trying to not place them in positions where they could fail from the same issues in the future.
- b. **Developing Best Practices** – These should be developed and published to be used in the Merit Academy, CSPCA Annual Conferences and regional conferences. We have the audience and venues, we need to take advantage of the opportunity to examine the past and not repeat the same issues that caused the same problems in the future.
- c. **Formal Mentoring Program** – Both personnel directors and personnel commissioners can learn from each other. CSPCA has a web-based forum for personnel directors and should probably develop a separate track for personnel commissioners. By posting questions, others can offer solutions or information that can assist those in need of information to assist them in the performance of their respective positions. A formal mentoring program should also be established to allow for one-on-one mentoring, this is a very powerful resource that could be of great assistance.

A follow-up session of the Strategic Planning Team took place in July of 2015. The following is a breakdown of the issues that were followed up on and discussed.

- a. **Board of Education** – Does the governing board understand what the roles and responsibilities of the personnel commission are? Do you have regular joint meetings scheduled with the governing board? This could be done on a yearly basis or more frequent if needed. Sometimes the power of just getting to know who the players are can be very powerful in future dealings. Suggestions included having CSPCSA having a presence at the California School Boards Association Annual Conference. We as an

organization, must take this on as a priority, it is no different that our relationship with CSEA or SEIU that we have cultivated over the past few years.

- b. **Annual Reports** – These if designed properly can tell a story about the merit system and its impact on the school district. The value of the role of the personnel commission can be expressed as well. The information should be distributed to all stakeholders and posted on the personnel commission’s webpage on the school district’s website. It also should be included on the governing board agenda as an information item each year. The annual report should report on outputs, i.e., number of positions filled, tests given, etc. It must include a section on outcomes. This is where you should list the difference that having a merit system in place made, what was the impact?
- c. **Forming Relationships** – Governing board members change frequently because of the election cycles or other reasons. Is there an opportunity to have an informational packet for the new governing board members about the merit system? Yes. If we are not doing this in our districts we are missing an educational opportunity of providing accurate and complete information about who we are and why it is we do what we do.
- d. **Size of Districts** – Smaller districts have a potential for an argument to be made to abolish the merit system because it is inefficient and expensive. Also, the union and district could bargain the effects as part of the contract. While there may be some validity to this argument, especially very small districts, there still are compelling reasons to maintain the merit system. The protections available to employees and the independence of the personnel commission are key elements that will be lost if a merit system is abolished.

## Merit Systems That Have Been Terminated by a Vote of the Employees

<b>Desert Sands – 2010</b>	<b>Los Banos – 2014</b>	<b>Barstow – 2012</b>	<b>Apple Valley – 2014</b>
<b>Banning – 2015</b>	<b>South Sacramento</b>	<b>South Lake Tahoe</b>	<b>Laguna Salada</b>

The listed districts above have recently voted out of the merit system. There have been others including Victorville - 2016, that voted to retain the merit system. There have been several others where the employees talked about the possibility of terminating the merit system. Without pointing out specific personnel directors or labor representatives, the following issues were central in most of these cases.

**Personnel Director** – The role of the personnel director and their performance is generally relational to the overall success of a merit system. New personnel directors that move into a district and make changes too quickly have been a common issue in some of these districts listed above. One should have a firm grasp of the landscape prior to attempting to change it. The flexibility versus rigidity of the personnel director coupled with past practice issues can and does lead to problems of acceptance by the classified employees or the administration.

**Labor Representatives** – The role of the labor representative is sometimes a factor in these termination efforts. The largest labor organization in the state for classified employees, the California School Employees Association or CSEA, has taken a neutral position on the merit system in California. They provide training to their members on the merit system and have a standing committee on merit. Much like the feeling of some school superintendents towards the merit system, some labor representatives have taken a similar active role in opposing merit systems in their respective areas of responsibility. This was especially true in the desert region of Southern California. They can steer the union in raising issues that they feel might be better left to collective bargaining thus negating the need for a merit system.

**Superintendents** – This in past years was sometimes an issue relating to loss of control. Because of the independent nature of and the ultimate authority over disciplinary matters exercised by personnel commissions, it has caused some superintendents to seek removal of the merit system. This has not been an issue lately.

**Disgruntled Employees** – There also have been instances where an employee that did not feel that they were treated fairly by a personnel commission action and responded by trying to get the merit system voted out. Mostly focused on a single issue rather than looking overall at how the commission functions, sometimes depending on the personalities involved it can take on a life of its own and start to generate steam. On rare occasions the individuals can be threatening or resort to intimidation to try and

achieve their results. This can move into a harassment situation that may require intervention to ensure stakeholders are not uncomfortable. At this point the district retains some responsibility to follow all applicable rules and regulations regarding all forms of harassment.

## **Merit System Sections of the Education Code – Termination of a Merit System**

### **Section 45226 – No Intimidation of Employees**

Any person who intimidates, coerces, or discriminates in any way against any classified employee for the doing of any act authorized herein shall be personally liable to such employee for all damages suffered thereby and such exemplary damages as the court may allow.

In any of the actions by employees regarding issues relating to the termination of a merit system, there can be absolutely no intimidation by any party or stakeholder. Stick to the issues and let the chips fall. Do not enter into anything that could be remotely afoul of this section, it is not worth it.

### **Section 45313 - Legal Counsel Requirements**

The legal counsel of the governing board shall aid and represent the commission in all legal matters. If the legal counsel does not respond to a written request by the commission for aid or representation within 15 working days of receipt of the written request, the counsel is deemed to have refused to aid or represent the commission in that matter.

The legal counsel shall refuse to represent the commission in circumstances in which the counsel knows, or has reason to know, that at the time the request is made a conflict exists between the interests of the commission and the interests of the governing board or the school district.

If the legal counsel refuses to aid or represent the commission in a legal matter, the commission may employ its own attorney, and the reasonable cost thereof shall constitute a legal charge against the general funds of the school district.

If the possibility of termination of the merit system is an issue that a personnel commission will be facing, a serious consideration should be given to obtaining outside legal counsel. This is permitted under the above section of the Education Code. The governing board's attorney is generally available to the personnel commission as a starting point for any legal matters. If there is the possibility of a conflict of interest between the governing board and/or district and the personnel commission, the law allows for separate counsel at no cost or impact to the personnel commissions budget.

### **45319 - Termination of the Merit System**

A merit (civil service) system within a school district may be terminated by one of the following methods:

(a) If the governing board of a school district, or a county board of education, receives a written petition of qualified electors not less in number than 10 percent of the number voting in

the last election for a member of the board calling for the termination of the merit (civil service) system and the system has been in operation for not less than five years or has been imposed pursuant to the terms of Section 45119 or 45120, the board shall order the county superintendent of schools to place the question of termination of the system on the ballot at the next regular governing board member election, or county board of education member election, or the next primary or general election in a general election year, whichever is the earlier after receipt by the county superintendent of schools.

The statement of purpose of the election shall read:

“Shall the merit (civil service) system for school employees not requiring certification qualifications, as provided for in Article 6 (commencing with Section 45240) of Chapter 5 of Part 25 of Division 3 of Title 2 of the Education Code of the State of California, and which has been in operation for at least five years, be terminated by the \_\_\_\_\_ School District of \_\_\_\_\_ County (or counties, where appropriate), or by the County Office of Education of \_\_\_\_\_ County on \_\_\_\_\_ (date to be specified by board)?”

The petition calling for the election, to be valid, shall contain the statement of purpose for the election as contained in this section

**This provision allows for the registered voters in a school district to petition directly to the governing board to call for an election to abolish the merit system by a direct vote of the people. The merit system must have been in place for at least 5 years. The question will be submitted to the voters at the next regularly scheduled election. The law does not allow for a special election to be called. The question to be submitted to the voters is listed as the “statement of purpose”.**

(b) If the governing board of a school district, or the county board of education, receives a written petition from 40 percent of the classified employees entitled to vote calling for the termination of the merit (civil service) system and the system has been in operation for not less than five years or has been imposed pursuant to the terms of Section 45119 or 45120, the governing board shall conduct an election by secret ballot of its classified personnel to determine whether or not they desire to have the merit system terminated within the district. The ballot shall read: “Shall the merit (civil service) system for classified employees be terminated in the \_\_\_\_\_ (name of school district, or county office of education) as of \_\_\_\_\_ (termination date)?”

As used in this subdivision, “classified employees” means all personnel who are a part of the classified service who are appointed in accordance with Section 45272.

In order to be valid, the petition calling for the termination of the merit (civil service) system shall be submitted to the governing board within 90 days after the date that the notice for the

circulation of the petition was filed with the governing board. The election shall be held during the regular school year and shall be held no earlier than 45 days and no later than 180 days after the date that the petition was submitted to the governing board.

If the merit system was adopted pursuant to Section 45224.5, classified employees entitled to vote in an election pursuant to this subdivision shall be limited to those classified employees who reside in the district.

This is the provision that allows for the employees of the district to ask for an election of the employees to terminate the merit system. The same five year provisions as shown above in section (a) are also in place here as well. The governing board is the conductor of the election, which must be done by secret ballot of the classified employees.

The petition circulated by the proponent of the action must be filed with the governing board within 90 days after the notice of circulation was filed with the governing board. This section does not require a labor organization to spearhead the effort, it could be done by an individual or group of classified employees outside of the scope of representation. If a sufficient number of valid signatures are collected and submitted an election will be scheduled no earlier than 45 days and no later than 180 days after submission. This provision also requires that the election be held during the regular school year.

An interesting point is mentioned in the last paragraph of this section. If the merit system was established by a vote of the people in the school district, under 45224.5, then only classified employees who reside within the boundaries of the school district are eligible to vote in the termination election.

c) The governing board shall devise an identification system designed to protect against fraud in the balloting process. In addition, the governing board shall appoint a three-member tabulation committee consisting of one member of the governing board, one member of the personnel commission of the district, and one member who shall be a classified employee of the district. It shall be the responsibility of the tabulation committee to canvass the election ballots and to certify the results of the election to the governing board at the next regular meeting of the governing board following the completion of the tabulation of the election ballots by the committee.

The governing board must set election procedures to cover how the election will be conducted. It specifically calls out developing procedures to protect against fraud.

This provision sets of the “voting officials” for the election. It is a three-member panel composed of a governing board member, a personnel commissioner and a classified employee. They must certify the results of the election to the governing board at their next regular schedule meeting.

(d) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the governing board shall not be required to provide release time for classified personnel to vote in an election conducted pursuant to subdivision (b). The governing board shall not conduct an election under subdivision (b) more than once in any two-year period.

**Employees are not required to receive release time while on-duty to vote in the election. The use of an employee driven vote to abolish the merit system cannot take place more than once in a two-year period. In other words after an unsuccessful attempt, there is a waiting period of two years before another election could be called for via the petition of employees.**

(e) It shall be unlawful for a public school employer and the exclusive representative of the classified employees of a school district to include the subject of the termination of the merit (classified service) system within the scope of representation.

**This whole section is not part of the scope of representation under collective bargaining agreements. It is not uncommon for districts that are facing the termination of the merit system to infer that the money that would be saved by the abolishment of the merit system could be available to the classified employees as part of the salary and benefit package. This section prohibits that from taking place. It may be an area that shows the need for an independent counsel for the commission to ensure that the district remains neutral during the election.**

(f) Members of the classified service shall be provided an adequate and ample opportunity to be informed of the arguments in favor of and in opposition to the termination of the merit (civil service) system prior to the conducting of an election called pursuant to subdivision (b). That opportunity shall include an open forum during which proponents of, and opponents to, the termination of the merit (civil service) system shall be permitted to debate the issue.

**This section provides for the dissemination of information, both pro and con, with regards to the termination of the merit system. It specifies that at a minimum, an open forum is to be scheduled to allow both sides to present and debate their respective positions.**

#### **45320 - Shut-Down Procedures**

If the majority of the qualified electors vote to terminate the merit system in a school district, or a county office of education, or if the majority of the classified employees vote to terminate the merit system in a school district, or a county office of education the personnel commission shall cease to function on the date specified in the election and the law pertaining to merit system districts, or county offices of education shall cease to have any force or effect in that district or county office of education.

Simultaneously, with the termination of the merit system, the governing board shall adopt rules and regulations relating to classified school employees as required by Section 45113.

Notwithstanding an action to terminate the merit system in a school district, or county office of education, the provisions of Section 45221, 45223, and 45224 shall be applicable at any time after at least two years have elapsed after the system has ceased to operate.

**This section of the Education Code specifies that if a majority of qualified electors or a majority of the classified employees vote to terminate the merit system, it shall cease to exist on the date specified in election. The governing board is then required to adopt rules and regulations as required in Section 45113 of the Education Code.**

Sections 45221, 45223 and 45224 of the Education Code cannot be used to reinstate the merit system without at least a two-year time having passed. If, as a result of the withdraw of a merit system taking place and the employees establish that it is not working to their satisfaction, a least a two-year period must pass before attempting to re-instate the merit system by a vote of the employees or the public.

## Hypothetical Steps and Timeline Required to Terminate a Merit System.

These are the steps required to terminate a merit system by petition of the employees.

1. Notification to the governing board of the intent to circulate a petition. This starts the clock running in the process. The petition to be accepted by the governing board must contain signatures of 40% of the classified employees. The petition must be filed with 90 days of the original notice of intent. The signatures on the petition cannot be collected prior to the notification be given to the governing board. In addition, to a place for the classified employee to sign, they should also be required to date their signature. Notification of this action must be included as an informational item on the next regular scheduled meeting of the governing board. At this point the governing board action is ministerial in that it should be reflected in their minutes that the intent to circulate the petition notification has been made.
2. Upon receipt of the petition signed by at least 40% of the regular classified employees, the governing board will need to act on several items at their next regularly scheduled meeting to set the election date, establish an employee identification system, set the date for the open forum and name the tabulation committee. Both regular and probationary employees that have been appointed under Section 45272 of the Education Code are eligible to sign the petition and to vote in the election.
3. The governing board will conduct an election, by secret ballot, with the question, phrased as follows:

“Shall the merit (civil service) system for classified employees be terminated in the \_\_\_\_\_ (name of school district, or county office of education) as of \_\_\_\_\_ (termination date)?”
4. The election must be held during the regular school year, no earlier than 45 days and no later than 180 days after the petition was submitted to the governing board.
5. An identification system must be developed to protect against fraud. This may be a master list of eligible classified employees that acts as a check-off list to ensure for one ballot, one vote. A tabulation committee is appointed to oversee the process consisting

of 3 members, one each from, a member of the board of trustees, a personnel commissioner and a classified employee.

6. There must be an open forum to discuss the proponents and opponents of the issues related to the termination of the merit system prior to the election.
7. Employees are not required to receive release-time to vote in the election.

## Things to Consider to Stay Out of Trouble

The best way to avoid being in a position to have the merit system terminated in your district is to not let the issue ever come to a vote. Sounds easy, but once you are headed down the road to an election it may be too late.

**Personnel Director** - We have discussed the role of the personnel director as being the first key to success. Open communication must be a skill possessed by the personnel director. As personnel commissioner's it is our role and responsibility to evaluate the performance of the personnel director on a regular basis. Remember they are a classified employee as well and we should practice what we preach.

In performing the evaluative role, the personnel commission should seek information from the various stakeholders in developing the evaluation of the personnel director. The make-up of the commission naturally leads to a division of labor for the three commissioners. The district's appointee should seek information and feed-back from the key players in administration. The employee's appointee should seek information and feed-back from the employees group. The joint appointee should seek information from the commission staff. Without getting this type of background information it is impossible to perform a thorough, fair and accurate evaluation of the Personnel Director. In the pre-65 districts whose commissioners are direct appointments by the State Superintendent of Instruction, the same system of rotation amongst the stakeholder groups could be established.

The evaluation process should include a review of previously developed goals and objectives for performance as well as a generation of new ones for future action. These could come as suggestions from the discussion of the various stakeholder groups.

One final caveat about this system. To fully make the best of it personnel commissioners should rotate the stakeholder groups each year. This allows each stakeholder group to get to know the personnel commissioners and share their expectations and ideas for the personnel commission. It can be a powerful method of communication.

**Communications** – Monthly newsletters, annual reports and up-to-date website are all best practices that facilitate communication to our stakeholders. Having a dedicated portion of your regular personnel commission agendas to have the district, employees and public to address the personnel commission on

matters not related to specific agenda items provides an avenue to sometime head issues off at the pass before they become larger.

**Employer/Employee Relations** – The personnel director should have a standing meeting on a regular basis with both the district and the employee representative. These are two separate meetings. Frequent communications are key to not letting issues grow out of control. Remember it is easier to steer clear of the iceberg with as much advance notice as possible. When you get too close, you limit your options of taking corrective action.

**CSPCA Director and Merit System Assistance** – Don't forget that one of the services of the California School Personnel Commissioners' Association is assistance to our member personnel commissions. Our Executive Director has been up and down the state acting as a facilitator between personnel commissions, personnel directors, administrators and labor representatives. He also has a cadre of seasoned personnel directors and personnel commissioners that can also offer experience and expertise in district's facing issues that could lead to termination efforts. Sometimes it can be as simple as a sounding board or may require a facilitated meeting of the affected parties. It is a valuable resource that is there if you need it.

**Use of an Interim Director** – If there is an open personnel director position, the use of an interim personnel director is available to the personnel commission. Generally, there are retired personnel directors from merit systems available throughout the state. There is a limit established by CALPERS that limits a retiree from working more than 960 hours in a fiscal year in a system that contracts with CALPERS for retirement benefits. You also can hire a consulting firm to provide the interim personnel director through a contractual basis and avoid the 960-hour requirement.

**Governing Board Relationships** – A couple of ideas on building the relationship between the governing board and the personal commission.

- a. The appointee of the governing board should consider attending the meetings of the governing board on a periodic basis. This could be done on a monthly or quarterly basis.
- b. Coupled with their attendance at the governing board meeting, consider placing an item on their agenda that has recent copies of the minutes of the personnel commission. In addition, if need, a brief update on personnel commission activities could be given as an oral report.

- c. Consider the establishment of a joint annual meeting between the governing board and the personnel commission. This would be a special meeting just to review actions the previous year regarding classified personnel and look at future issues.
- d. Have a monthly or quarterly informal meeting over breakfast or lunch between the governing board president and the personnel commission chairperson. This is a powerful tool that can build both formal and informal relationships.

These activities are all trying to take advantage of opportunities to make sure the governing board understands the value of and the role of the personnel commission and merit system.

**Labor Organization Relations** – Like the above section on the governing board, look for opportunities to improve relationships with the labor group and classified employees.

- a. Consider having the appointee of the employees attend the regular meetings of their organization. You are the representative of those employees and they should know you and who you are.
- b. Look for opportunities to visit school sites in conjunction with the personnel director to meet with employees at their work site, see what it is they do, ask about their jobs. This is another opportunity to go directly to the employees and spread the word about the merit system. A schedule could be set up, monthly, and rotated amongst the personnel commissioners, resulting in four visits a year per commissioner. Then report that out as part of your next commission meeting.

**California School Personnel Commissioners' Association** – Don't forget you have a partner out there with CSPCA. The assistance available for both personnel directors and personnel commissioners is invaluable. The following is a list of services provided by CSPCA.

- a. Personal and group mentoring for new personnel commissioners and personnel directors.
- b. Regular information E-Mail bulletins are sent to all personnel directors and those personnel commissioners who have provided an E-Mail address for the CSPCA phone book.

- c. We have both regional and the state conferences. All conference agendas are focused directly on what personnel commissions and personnel directors need to be more productive in the performance of their duties. We have made the conferences much more cost effective, especially in this economic environment.
- d. We are now partnering with CODESP to offer free webinar training for our personnel directors, staff and personnel commissioners.
- e. The Merit System academy is better than ever. The training is the best and most intense that any governing body or personnel staff receives in this state. The academy is not only great for personnel commissioners but personnel directors and staff as well. It still is very cost effective with a tuition of \$500.
- f. We offer a list serve through "Yahoo Groups". This service is well used by personnel directors, commission staff and personal commissioners who request to be included. Members can post an issue, problem or question for their peers. Many creative solutions are offered through this synergistic group. It continues to grow.
- g. The CSPCA web site was updated and is kept up to date regularly, providing almost any resource a personnel commissioner or personnel director needs. The site includes a "Members Only" password protected that provides current legal and legislative information, contact information for personnel directors and personnel commissioners, a list of hearing officers for Commission hearings, CSPCA Board information including all the policies.
- h. We provide recruitment services to the personnel commissions for classified personnel directors when there is a vacancy.
- i. We provide a well-qualified interim director in the absence of the personnel commissions regular personnel director.

- j. We have a Merit System Assistance team. Our team will help keep the merit system when there is a serious move to eliminate the merit system. We will also do educational presentations to personnel commissions at their requests, using both on line and personal presentations. A call for assistance or information to the Executive Director will put you in contact with some of the best and brightest practitioners and personnel commissioners.
  
- k. We are currently developing a "Human Resource Academy" in addition to the current "Merit System academy" The HR Academy will focus on the technical nuts and bolts of running a Classified Human Resource office. This academy will provide personnel director and commission staff cutting edge information.
  
- l. We are developing training for all personnel commissioners, personnel directors and commission staff to be delivered by on line meeting format, and video conferencing.

This list shows the types of services that CSPCA provides. The thing to remember is that when you need information, help or just someone to talk to, you are not alone. The assistance is there, you just have to ask. The mentoring program, while now being done on an informal basis, provides you with a direct contact in your region. It is powerful, don't miss the opportunity if its needed.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would be remis without recognizing our President Patricia Ridenour who saw the need for a source of information for districts that might be facing a termination effort.

Our Executive Director George Cole for his background information and always being there if I had a question during the preparation of the report.

And finally, to Past President Toni Wilkerson who acted as a reviewer of this report.

Thanks to each of them for the valuable assistance that they have provided. I hope you find this report valuable.

Dave Holmerud

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