

S.C. Senate Staffers Quietly Receive Pay Raises

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By Rick Brundrett - The Nerve

Since 5:30 p.m. on December 15, S.C. Senate staffers, including the chamber's top administrator, received pay hikes of up to nearly 34%, The Nerve found in a review of chamber records.

The top-paid staffer is Jeff Gossett, who, as the Senate clerk, manages the \$16.3 million, 46-member chamber. He makes \$225,000 annually, an increase of \$14,864, or 7%, from his salary as of December 2019, according to records provided to The Nerve under the S.C. Freedom of Information Act.

Pay hikes over the period for the other 14 Senate employees making at least \$50,000 ranged from 5.4% to 33.6%. Seventy-three employees earn at least \$50,000 yearly, including 23 with annual salaries of at least \$100,000, records show.

In comparison, 78 House staffers make at least \$50,000 yearly, with House clerk Charles Reid as the top-paid employee at \$212,250, according to records. Reid manages the 124-member chamber, which has a \$22.7 million budget.

Pay for Reid and all but one of the other House employees in the \$50,000-plus group remained the same compared to December 2019, records show. Eighteen staffers make at least \$100,000 yearly.

The total number of House and Senate employees in the six-figure club grew by one compared to last year, which had jumped by 13 over 2018, as The Nerve previously [reported](#).

Neither Reid nor Gossett responded to written questions submitted Wednesday by The Nerve.

Unlike most other state agencies, neither the Senate nor the House provides information to the [state salary database](#), maintained by the S.C. Department of Administration. The Nerve over the years has obtained employee and salary lists from the chambers only after submitting formal open-records requests.

Under an annually renewed state budget proviso, House speaker Jay Lucas, R-Darlington, and Senate president Harvey Peeler, R-Cherokee, "shall determine the amount necessary for compensation" for House and Senate employees from appropriated funds for "Employee Pay Increases."

Besides permanent, full-time employees, the chambers also use college students as part-time pages. A budget proviso allows the House to have up to 144 pages to be "available for any necessary service" to the chamber.

Both the House and Senate have plenty of money for staff pay raises. The House started this fiscal

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reached July 1 with a \$23.7 million general fund surplus – nearly \$1 million more than its entire budget – while the Senate had \$5.8 million in general fund reserves, state comptroller general records show.
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Following are the 10 top-paid Senate staffers, with pay hikes in parentheses, according to Senate records:

- Jeff Gossett, clerk, “Parliamentarian,” research director: \$225,000 (7.07%);
- Michael Shealy, budget director: \$176,181;
- Ken Moffitt, assistant clerk: \$175,000 (11.9%);
- John Hazzard: assistant “Parliamentarian,” counsel to Senate president: \$169,646;
- Andy Fiffick, chief of staff, Judiciary Committee: \$150,000 (8.93%);
- Heather Anderson, staff attorney: \$150,000 (33.69%);
- Angie Willis, assistant research director, Finance Committee: \$143,056;
- Martha Casto, chief of staff, Senate president: \$127,500;
- Grant Gibson: assistant research director, Finance Committee: \$125,609;
- Sara Parrish, counsel to the clerk: \$125,000 (11.41%)

Following are the 10 top-paid House staffers, according to House records:

- Charles Reid, clerk: \$212,250;
- Patrick Dennis: personnel director, chief of staff: \$212,000;
- Daniel Boan, chief of staff, Ways and Means Committee: \$166,200;
- Emma Dean, chief counsel, Judiciary Committee: \$154,000;
- Steven Davidson, chief legal counsel, Labor, Commerce and Industry Committee: \$151,000;
- Pierce McNair, research director, Education Committee: \$149,000;
- Donald Hottel, assistant clerk in charge, House research: \$145,500;
- Jennifer Dobson, research director, Legislative Oversight Committee: \$128,000;
- Kate Turner, budget director/counsel, Ways and Means Committee: \$128,000;
- Mitchell Dorman, sergeant-at-arms: \$115,000

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