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Feature Stories

LB City \$200K Club 647% Larger than Comparable City

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By Stephen Downing

"It's not too much of a stretch to say that some of the only people in America who are going to work the same job, in the same place, with a health and retirement package for 30 years are sitting in this chamber." – President Barack Obama, State of the Union Address, Jan. 12, 2016.

It is also not too much of a stretch to say that some of the people who are going to work the same job, in the same place, with salary, benefits and overtime pay along with a health and retirement package better than that of most Long Beach taxpayers working in the private sector are sitting in Long Beach City Hall.

In 2013, Transparent California began publishing the most comprehensive collection of pay, benefit and pension data ever compiled for California cities. A hard look at the data for 2014 reveals egregious examples of misplaced taxpayer funds. Long Beach is no exception.

Let's start with the high rollers who we refer to as the Long Beach 2014 \$200K Club. Its membership is 224 strong and includes a six member

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faction who made it to the \$300K Club.

[Editor’s Note: See the complete list here: [\\$200K Club](#)]

\$200K Club – Population Comparison to Other Cities

The Long Beach City Employee \$200K Club had 224 participants, a membership 647 percent larger than Fresno and 177 percent greater than Sacramento; both bigger – but comparable – cities in population.

City	Population	\$300K	\$200K
Fresno	.....515,986.....	1.....	29
Sacramento	....485,199.....	2.....	79
Long Beach	....473,577.....	6.....	218

How Does Long Beach Top Management Compare?

When it comes to pay for top management positions, our city manager compares well to city manager positions in the other two cities, but that’s where it stops.

The city attorney took in 27 percent more than his counterpart in Fresno and 57 percent more than the city attorney in Sacramento, while our police chief pulled down 12.9 percent more than the chief in Fresno and 22 percent more than the chief in Sacramento.

The gap was even bigger with our fire chief whose take was 148.3 percent greater than the chief in Sacramento and 26.4 percent more than his counterpart in Fresno.

City-to-City Top Management Pay Comparison (2014)

Position	City	Salary/Benefits
City Manager	.....Fresno.....	\$322,085
	.....Sacramento.....	\$319,259
	.....Long Beach.....	\$339,706
City Attorney	.....Fresno.....	\$230,656
	.....Sacramento.....	\$284,972
	.....Long Beach.....	\$362,250
Police Chief	.....Fresno.....	\$287,193
	.....Sacramento.....	\$265,828
	.....Long Beach.....	\$324,327
Fire Chief	.....Fresno.....	\$232,069
	.....Sacramento.....	\$118,117

.....Long Beach.....\$293,368

LB Overtime – 43% Greater than Other Cities (2014)

Average base pay for city workers between two of the three cities was reasonably analogous, but Long Beach went completely off the chart when it came to handing out cash overtime.

Both Fresno and Sacramento averaged about \$4,097 cash overtime per employee while Long Beach averaged \$5,854 per employee – a significant 43 percent more in comparison to the other cities.

Editor's Note: The average Long Beach overtime of \$5,854 is a correction to numbers used in our print edition. A correction will follow in our Feb. 5 issue as well.

City-to-City Average Pay Comparison (2014)

City	Ave	Ave OT	Employ
Fresno	\$50,176	\$4,157	3,476
Sacto	\$42,621	\$4,038	5,757
LB	\$51,253	\$5,854	6,761

LB Total Overtime Dollars

A city-to-city comparison of total overtime dollars revealed Long Beach outspending Fresno by 154 percent and Sacramento by 70.2 percent with a total cash outlay of \$39.5 million compared to an average expenditure of \$19.4 million between the comparable cities.

City-to-City Total Overtime Pay Comparison (2014)

City	OT Paid	Population
Fresno	\$15,571,628	515,986
Sacramento	\$23,252,180	485,199
Long Beach	\$39,583,167	473,577

City Auditor Says Management Improvements Needed

In May 2015, after having received, through its Fraud Hotline, an anonymous complaint the city auditor conducted an investigation into the payment of the night-shift special pay and the extensive use of overtime to staff the communications centers administered by the fire and police departments. The resulting report provided an excellent analysis and made reform recommendations as follows:

1. Staffing levels need further assessment.
2. Enhanced recruitment is critically needed.
3. Allocation of overtime can be improved.
4. Manual processes should be automated.

When reviewing the top overtime jobs in Long Beach (see Table below) it is clear that our city managers should be looking at more than just the communications centers that came to the auditor's attention.

*Four public safety workers earned more in overtime than their base salaries.

*A \$153,721 per year battalion chief made it into the \$300K Club with \$107,150 in overtime.

*A \$75,851 per year public safety dispatcher made it into the \$200K Club with \$109,616 in overtime.

*A special services officer whose base pay was \$61,229 hauled in \$95,826 in cash overtime.

Top Overtime Jobs in Long Beach

Name	Total Pay
Job Title	Base Pay OT Pay & Benefits
Eli Moreno	
Police Ofcr	.....\$100,359.....\$112,124.....\$259,127
Todd Taylor	
Firefighter	.....\$102,216.....\$111,790.....\$252,433
Kit Gonzalez	
Dispatcher	.....\$75,851.....\$109,616.....\$216,334
Robert Kuroda	
Police Sgt	.....\$123,325.....\$108,735.....\$276,296
Jeffery Ohs	
Batt. Chief	.....\$153,721.....\$107,150.....\$311,557
Barton Hollomon	
Firefighter	.....\$104,604.....\$102,603.....\$248,846
Arthur Perez	
Spcl Svs Off	.....\$61,229.....\$95,826.....\$185,147
Steve Smock	
Police Sgt	.....\$129,950.....\$93,371.....\$267,994
Ty D'Amico	
Firefighter	.....\$108,170.....\$93,351.....\$243,652
Steven Zaan	
Firefighter	.....\$106,471.....\$91,235.....\$240,087

Allotments to the “Undisclosed”

Of the 222 city workers belonging to the \$200K Club, 20 are LBPD Officers whose names are “Undisclosed” in the public compensation reports published by Transparent California.

According to Long Beach City Human Relations, the 114 “undisclosed” personnel listed in the compensation reports are drug and vice undercover officers who comprise a staggering 14.2 percent of the sworn strength of the entire police department.

The paired pattern of compensation for the 20 undisclosed \$200K Club undercover officers seen in the below table continues in the entire list of 114 (not shown here), signaling the highly questionable management practice of overtime pay allocated by rank and time in grade, rather than being individually earned.

This practice could very well have emanated from the contract between the police union and the city that provides, “Overtime shall be assigned on a fair and equitable basis in accordance with criteria determined and published by the chief of police.”

The total overtime compensation for the 114 undisclosed LBPD officers was \$3.2 million or 16.2 percent of their total compensation of \$19.7 million.

Total overtime compensation allotted to the 20 undisclosed LBPD officers in the \$200K Club was \$2.5 million or 58 percent of their total pay and benefits of \$4.3 million.

‘Undisclosed’

Drug and vice undercover officers in the \$200K Club:

Rank	Base Pay	OT Pay	Total Pay & Benefits
Sergeant...	\$130,496.....	\$76,938.....	\$252,473
Sergeant...	\$130,496.....	\$76,938.....	\$252,473
Officer.....	\$140,247.....	\$88,362.....	\$235,489
Officer.....	\$140,247.....	\$88,362.....	\$235,489
Sergeant...	\$129,303.....	\$47,064.....	\$221,128
Sergeant...	\$129,303.....	\$47,064.....	\$221,128
Officer.....	\$102,874.....	\$76,015.....	\$217,937

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Officer.....	\$102,874.....	\$76,015.....	\$217,937
Sergeant...	\$129,302.....	\$45,080.....	\$217,705
Sergeant...	\$129,302.....	\$45,080.....	\$217,705
Officer.....	\$103,820.....	\$63,049.....	\$205,969
Officer.....	\$103,820.....	\$63,049.....	\$205,969
Officer.....	\$104,538.....	\$58,158.....	\$205,626
Officer.....	\$104,538.....	\$58,158.....	\$205,626
Sergeant...	\$129,303.....	\$17,285.....	\$205,610
Sergeant...	\$129,303.....	\$17,285.....	\$205,610
Sergeant...	\$130,496.....	\$27,478.....	\$204,664
Sergeant...	\$130,496.....	\$27,478.....	\$204,664
Sergeant...	\$127,213.....	\$29,125.....	\$200,915
Sergeant...	\$127,213.....	\$29,125.....	\$200,915

Long Beach Workers Ahead of Private Sector Jobs

Unlike the president's reminder to congress, Mayor Garcia, in his recent 2016 State of the City address, did not mention the bloated compensation and benefit levels enjoyed by the occupants of city hall. He did speak to the need to create jobs, improve the minimum wage and fund the crumbling infrastructure that our city government has been unable to keep pace with, totaling \$2.8 billion.

The primary advantages of working for the City of Long Beach are generous benefits, solid pay and relative job security, a combination that is challenging for the middle class worker to find in the private sector, especially in today's job marketplace.

Better management of the taxpayers' money and holding the line on salary and benefits until those left behind are able to catch up is essential.

The city council needs to start pulling all consent calendar items that cost money and engage in public discussion, regardless of the subject matter, and make their decisions on an "essential to have" as opposed to "nice to have" basis, regardless of the emotional or political pressures put upon them by outside sources.

City managers need to focus on the red flags, drill down into numbers like those uncovered in this column and make the tough decisions they are paid to make. Hold the line. Cut costs. Eliminate waste. Roll back obscene benefits that are nowhere to be found in the private sector – and look after the taxpayer dollar as if it were their own.

In our next column, "Money for Nothing – Long Beach Taxpayers Foot the Bill for Union Work," we will examine a self-serving city hall system that is out of control.

Stephen Downing is a resident of Long Beach and a retired LAPD Deputy Chief of Police.

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