

H A R L A N R I C H A R D S

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Overtime Wages for Prison Guards

On January 10th the Wisconsin State Journal ran an article about how much overtime the Wisconsin Department of Corrections spent in 2018 - \$50 million. It was a very short article, basically listing how much was spent at some of the prisons and noting that 15% of correctional officer positions were currently unfilled.

One thing I thought was interesting was that the reporter compared the 2018 overtime paid with the 2016 overtime data - up \$7 million from 2016 - stating that the 2017 figures weren't available. I know where the data could be found: in my July 20, 2018 blog. Or, better yet, in the 2018 archives of their own newspaper. I suspect that somebody in the newspaper (perhaps an editor) wanted to downplay the overtime paid out by the DOC. The article last year went into great detail listing the highest paid guards (\$175,000; \$169,000; and \$168,000). See my previous blog for more details.

The point is that when these guards retire they are paid 60% of the average annual earnings of their 3 highest paid years. When they have 3 years of \$100,000 plus earnings, they retire at a pension greater than most Wisconsin citizens earn working full time. In fact, it is about 3 times what you would earn if you were paid minimum wage for a full time job.

Do correctional officers deserve a decent pension? Yes!
Do they deserve a windfall that costs state taxpayers millions of dollars per year? No!

That's why I think the newspaper downplayed the story and omitted the details contained in the 2018 article - to prevent a public outcry about the obscene pensions correctional officers are receiving.