

The California State Auditor released the following report today:

County Pay Practices

*Although the Counties We Visited have Rules in Place to Ensure Fairness,
Data Show That a Gender Wage Gap Still Exists*

BACKGROUND

Both federal and state laws protect employees from discrimination based on their sex and specifically, prohibit sex-based wage discrimination among employees. California requires equal pay for substantially similar work when viewed as a composite of skill, effort, and responsibility, unless the employer can demonstrate that differences in pay are job-related and based on factors other than sex. Counties must generally comply with merit system rules—personnel standards—that describe how the county will recruit, select, and compensate employees for positions that have permanent status.

KEY FINDINGS

During our review of the pay practices at four counties—Fresno, Los Angeles, Orange, and Santa Clara— from fiscal years 2010-11 through 2014-15, we noted the following:

- Women who worked full-time earned, on average less than their male counterparts—this wage gap persisted with no clear positive trend at any county toward achieving higher levels of pay equality.
 - ✓ Women earned between 73 percent and 88 percent of the total pay men earned over this period.
 - ✓ In fact, the total wage gap slightly increased in each of the four counties—in Los Angeles, female employees earned 80 percent of male employees' average total compensation in fiscal year 2010-11 but dropped to 76 percent by the end of fiscal year 2014-15.
- Because in fiscal year 2014-15 more men than women tended to occupy most highly compensated positions, greater pay equality could not be achieved.
 - ✓ In three counties, generally more men than women held the higher paying county jobs even though there are more women who are full-time employees than men.
 - ✓ In Los Angeles and Orange counties, most of the higher paying jobs—fire captains and deputy sheriffs—were held by men. In fact, only four of the 622 fire captains in Los Angeles were women and less than 10 percent of the deputy sheriffs in Orange County were women.
- Men earned more in nearly 850 job classifications while women earned more in only 492 classifications.
- Although counties generally documented the process leading up to hiring decisions, county officials could only provide evidence about why they chose or did not select candidates in 25 percent of the competitive hiring or promotional decisions we reviewed.
- Of the new hires we reviewed, female employees were less likely to receive salaries above the midpoints of the salary ranges for positions with negotiated salaries.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

We made several recommendations to the Legislature including the following:

- Ensure counties monitor pay disparities by requiring periodic reviews of total average compensation for male employees and female employees, and require counties to report their findings publicly.
- Require counties to document hiring decisions to ensure decisions for civil service positions are objective.

Additionally, we recommended that counties develop policies requiring hiring managers to document the reasons for choosing selected candidates over others from the eligibility list, and that they develop tracking mechanisms to readily monitor and evaluate gender-based pay equity complaints.