

# Law Enforcement Articles

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## A Look at Pay Parity in State Patrol and Conservation Agencies

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*Abstract:* This research puts pay and contextual data gleaned from state conservation and state patrol agencies in Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Missouri, and West Virginia into the context of an anonymous survey of conservation rangers from across the country. Facts about pay, including the number of rangers, starting pay, and pay for experienced rangers is viewed through the lens of responses from 372 rangers in 17 states across the United States. The findings demonstrate that, at least in the states surveyed, state patrol officers generally make higher wages than conservation rangers, a fact not lost on rangers who responded to the survey. Nearly 98% of respondents believe that troopers make more money than rangers; about 86% attribute the difference in pay to politics. Understanding the facts about parity in pay as well as staff perceptions of inequity is important for state agencies attempting to recruit and retain qualified staff.

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*Key words:* pay parity, law enforcement, state agencies, game wardens, state troopers

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An essential goal of most government agencies is the recruitment and retention of talented employees by providing jobs that match applicant skills and interests and by offering compensation that employees view as fair. Equity in pay includes the concepts of comparable worth, comparisons with compensation of others in similar occupations both inside and outside the agency, and the individual employee's own view of the fairness of his or her compensation in light of the effort expended. Romanoff et al. (1986, 18) explain that "an employee continuously monitors his or her inputs and outputs on the job, and perceives an equitable situation when the ratio of his or her inputs and outputs are equal to those of other employees." Taken across the workplace, the perception of fairness affects morale and the ability to recruit and retain staff. As a result, equity in pay within and across agencies for similar jobs is an important topic to public administrators, as perceptions of inequity "would be devastating to the morale of the agency that got the short end of the deal" (Hoover et al. 1996, 15).

Parity in pay has been on and off the agenda in federal government, particularly in law enforcement. Border patrol agents, for example, have bitterly complained about substandard pay and benefits when compared to other law enforcement officers. September 11, 2001, is viewed by some writers as a pivotal point after which demands for equity increased across agencies that support border security and anti-terrorism activities (Barr 2006). This notion is given credence by a Congressional Budget Office report that explored comparisons in pay of federal and non-federal law

enforcement officers because of concerns about "the federal government's ability to recruit and retain high-quality personnel for those positions" (Elliott 2005, vii). In a 2004 report to Congress, "Federal Law Enforcement Pay and Benefits," the Office of Personnel Management points out that "perceptions of inequity" that exist among federal law enforcement officers can lead to "morale problems [and] staffing disruptions" (James 2004, ii, iii).

In local governments, police officers and firefighter pay parity debates have been common in major cities throughout the country for more than a century. Hoover et al. (1996, 15) note that "[w]age parity between police officers and firefighters has eroded steadily since 1950." Theories for the change relate to the shift in relative values of these occupations due to improved fire protection that has lowered home fire risk (Federal Emergency Management Agency 1997) and to higher value placed on police protection due to increased public concerns over crime. These perceived inequities have resulted in ongoing battles for pay parity, with police on the winning end in recent years. A similar theory might be proposed for disparities between state patrol and conservation rangers, in this case lack of parity related to the lower value placed on protection of wildlife and the environment and public perception of "[g]ame laws . . . as arbitrary and illegitimate invasions of the state into a traditional activity . . ." (Brymer 1991, 181).

Pay parity has less often a subject of public or vocal debate at the state level. There are, however, some important exceptions. In California, there has been an ongoing verbal war for comparable pay

and benefits between state corrections and highway patrol officers (Ortiz 2011). A similar debate continues between California game wardens and the state highway patrol, where a current advertising campaign sponsored by the California Game and Fish Wardens Association points out large discrepancies between starting pay of game wardens at US\$3570 per month and that of California Highway Patrol officers at \$6664 per month. In Florida (Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission 2008) and Massachusetts (Environmental Law Enforcement Review Panel 2005), state commissions recommended parity in pay and/or benefits for conservation law enforcement and highway patrol officers. In Texas, a state audit found trooper and game warden pay lagged well behind local police department pay, the issue of parity a concern for recruitment and retention. A 2007 Pittsburgh Tribune-Review article focusing on challenges to staffing at fish and game agencies noted a \$9000 annual salary differential between troopers and rangers in Pennsylvania (Associated Press 2007). During Georgia's 2012 legislative session, Georgia's rangers and Georgia Bureau of Investigation agents lobbied the legislature for parity in pay with higher-paid state troopers.

In any consideration of parity in pay, factors that determine law enforcement pay scales must first be addressed to rule out legitimate reasons for pay differentials when comparing state agency law enforcement officers. Inequities in pay are commonly justified based on hazardous duty or level of risk, educational levels, experience including prior military service, and shift work. Given the similar job attributes of conservation rangers and highway patrol officers, finding justification for differentiation in pay based on job description is difficult. Both state patrol officers and game wardens carry weapons, generally work independently, have arrest powers, pursue perpetrators, drive long distances, often face perpetrators with multiple violations including substance abuse, and work in difficult weather conditions. All of these conditions impart enhanced risk of injury or fatality.

While State patrol officers may log more miles, game wardens deal with a higher percentage of armed people. A 1990 study by the Wildlife Management Institute indicates that "[a]bout 82% of all game wardens are likely to be assaulted some time during a 30-year career" (Stanley 1990). Chief Rob Buonamici of the Nevada Department of Wildlife says that "a warden is about 2.5 times [more] likely to be assaulted with a deadly weapon than are other officers" (personal communication 2012). Rangers also generally work independently in remote areas and cannot count on backup, further increasing risk when they encounter groups engaged in criminal activity. State patrol officers are, however, more likely to be involved in vehicular assaults or in automobile accidents related to pursuits. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that in 2010,

the fatality rate for "police and sheriff's patrol officers" was 18 per 100,000, the tenth highest of all industries.

Another way to look at comparative risk is to compare total number of people employed in the profession to the total number of deaths. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in May 2010 there were 6330 state-employed fish and game wardens and 63,190 state-employed police patrol officers. Chris Cosgriff of the Office Down Memorial Page reports all-cause on-the-job fatalities from 2002 through 2011 of 144 for state highway patrol deaths and 28 for state conservation agency employees (personal communication 2012). Using 2010 data as an estimate of the number of officers on the job each year, the total deaths over the nine-year period would reflect rates of .02% and .04%, respectively, for state patrol and conservation officers. Note that these figures provide only a rough estimate of fatality rates over 10 years, and deaths are not necessarily violent or related to interaction with a perpetrator. This information, however, does indicate little difference in the relative hazard of the two job categories.

Stress factors are also taken into consideration in law enforcement pay and benefits. Stress may be the result of 24/7 call and shift work, poor morale due to perceptions of low or unfair wages, and the potential for job-related injury. According to researchers at the CDC's National Institute for Health and Safety, "unresolved" stress that faces many law enforcement officers affects the body's ability to recuperate and the "risk of injury or disease escalates." In recognition of the stress and physical demands of these jobs, in some states, law enforcement officers qualify for retirement after 25 years or as early as age 50.

Agency history, political relationships with legislators, and the source of agency funding are also factors affecting parity in pay and benefits. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2010, the mean annual wage of state-employed fish and game wardens was \$56,540, compared to \$58,200 for state troopers, although this information is markedly higher than pay reported in the state agency and ranger surveys conducted in this research. Non-wage benefits can also create an unlevel playing field. Bob Orange, a member of the California Game Wardens Association, reports that "California Highway Patrol receive a half hour each day in overtime for 'donning and doffing their uniforms' and another half hour of overtime for eating" (personal communication 2012). Some states, including Oklahoma, provide pay for dry cleaning for state patrol officer uniforms but not for other law enforcement officers. According to one respondent from Alabama, where wages are equivalent for troopers and rangers, troopers get better retirement packages. Another commonly cited difference that affects the individual's income is the ability to seek after-hours employment. Since most troopers have defined shifts, they are more likely to be able to seek outside

work than rangers, many of whom are on call 24/7. Some states pay for on-call hours for troopers, but not for rangers.

Even if wages and benefits are equitable, the perception of inequity can be damaging to morale and recruitment. Understanding factual data on parity in pay and benefits as well as perceptions of inequity is important for state agencies attempting to recruit and retain qualified staff. This research sets out to accomplish two things: to examine law enforcement pay at comparable state law enforcement agencies, state patrol (or highway patrol) and conservation (or natural resources/wildlife) agencies, in an array of southern states to determine if there are inequities in wages and benefits in these states; and to further understand and put into the context of actual pay any perceived inequities in wages and benefits by analyzing survey data provided by active conservation rangers across the country.

## Methods

State patrol and conservation agencies in 10 southern states were requested to provide 10 years of data on the number of officers employed, starting pay, and average pay at 10 years, as well as some contextual data including the number of citations written and state budget totals by department. Repeated requests were made using a standard spreadsheet to ensure consistent data. Spreadsheets were returned by both state patrol and conservation agencies in six states: Missouri, West Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, Florida, and Tennessee. Some responses were incomplete because records were not maintained, maintained in a different format, or were missing. Other states queried did not respond to requests for information. When states were unable to provide salary comparisons, pay by rank was requested. Direct comparisons between agencies and states were made only when matching data was available.

To further understand trooper and ranger perceptions and to gather additional data on job requirements, an anonymous survey was conducted via an online survey tool between 27 January and 1 March 2012. The link to the survey was sent to numerous ranger and trooper associations across the United States. In all cases, if a ranger organization received a request, the same request was sent to a trooper organization in the same state. While not a probability sample, the intent of the even-handed distribution was to obtain roughly equivalent numbers of survey responses from both troopers and rangers. Social media, requests to national organizations, posting in law enforcement forums, and personal contacts were also used to begin the survey process. The survey questions were intended to elicit factual data about wages and job characteristics, as well as perceptions about equity in pay. Information derived from that data is presented, alongside actual state data.

Of concern to the researcher was the almost complete absence of highway patrol respondents. Of 382 completed surveys, only 10 were from state patrol officers. When the results are considered, it seems obvious that the lopsided results are an indication of dissatisfaction by conservation rangers, leading to a higher interest in participation. Because of the small number of highway patrol respondents, these results were discarded and only the responses from the 372 rangers were used for interpretation.

Most of the 21 questions in the survey were multiple choice, although some short answer questions including state of residence, rank, and pay were included. Rangers were asked a variety of questions about pay compared to state troopers, as well as questions about job hazards. An open-ended question provided opportunities for respondents to add comments about any topic related to the survey. Most data collected was nominal, with the exception of some of the demographic information and annual income. Descriptive data and regression analysis were used to compare the two job categories. The intent of this information is to confirm or refute perceptions of pay inequity in these two state agencies across a sampling of southern states and to explore ranger perceptions of the reasons for any differences in pay.

## Results

Data was derived from two major sources: a multi-state survey of active rangers from across the United States and information provided by state conservation and highway patrol agencies concerning officer pay, number of officers, number of citations, and information about state budgets. The state survey provides factual data for comparison of pay for state troopers and conservation officers, while the practitioner survey provides a broader view of perceptions about equity in pay from the ranger perspective.

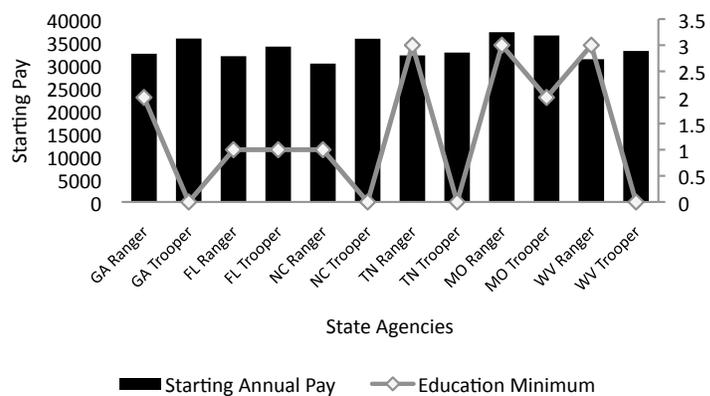
Due to negligible response from state troopers on the national survey, responses from the 10 respondents who identified themselves as state troopers were excluded, leaving a total of 372 responses from active rangers in 17 states. Georgia, Virginia, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Wisconsin, and Mississippi, in relative order, had the highest number of respondents. Mean age of grouped data for survey respondents was 41 years with approximately 15 years of experience. Over 79% of respondents had at least a two-year college degree, and 48% had a bachelor's degree. Mean pay of survey respondents was \$45,832, median pay was \$41,000, and mode was \$38,000 of the 364 conservation rangers reporting annual income. While information about rank was obtained, the disparity in ranking system names made use of this information impractical.

A total of 12 state agencies in six states returned information, but because of missing data, some states had to be excluded when matched sets were compared. Of the five states that returned con-

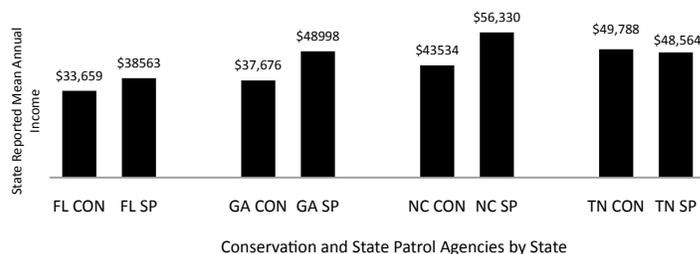
sistent data for both conservation and state patrol agencies, the economy clearly had an impact on employment. Seven of the agencies reduced their workforce between 2006 and 2010 at a time when the mean population growth for Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Missouri was 14.5%. State patrol employment in Missouri and Georgia grew by 10% and 5%, respectively, and North Carolina's conservation organization remained unchanged in size during the same time period. While many state agencies slashed budgets during the economic downturn, data provided by Florida, Georgia, Missouri, North Carolina, and Tennessee indicates that some state budgets for law enforcement increased from 2006 to 2010. The major exceptions are Georgia's conservation budget and the state patrol budgets for Florida and Tennessee, all of which suffered significant cuts, while their state counterpart agencies saw increases. Georgia State Patrol's field operations alone increased by almost 33% over the five year period.

The economic climate clearly affected pay scales. Starting pay did not change in any of the states surveyed from 2007 through 2010 and in some states for longer periods of time. Surveyed rangers also report that many state agencies have effectively reduced their incomes by passing along higher health insurance costs through increased employee cost-sharing. In some of the states surveyed, pay is dependent on fees that come into the agency, not through legislative appropriation. In other states, fines go back to local governments through local court systems and are not recorded at the state, effectively separating the outcomes from the operations. These local governments are also affected when there are trooper and ranger cuts, since in most cases, fewer officers in the field means fewer tickets or citations written. North Carolina is an exception; despite budget cuts, state patrol officers issued more tickets in 2010 than in 2006. The public mantra is "do less with more," but surveyed rangers feel stretched. If equally distributed across the state, each conservation ranger in Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Missouri would be responsible for 275 square miles. The scarcity of rangers creates a type of multiplier effect, that is, the fewer rangers, the lower the rate of detection and lower deterrence of crime. The physical demands and frustrations of attempting to cover such a wide area were described by many rangers in the survey.

Data from responding states indicates that ranger pay is generally lower than for state troopers, information that was confirmed in the ranger survey. Almost 98% of conservation officers agreed with the statement, "State troopers make higher wages," and 63% of rangers believe that state troopers also have better benefits. Of 368 respondents, almost 95% said that pay and benefits should be equal between the two agencies. To determine how accurate these perceptions are, states were asked to provide information about



**Figure 1.** 2010 Mean starting pay and minimum education requirements (0 = GED, 1 = a high school diploma, 2 = an associate degree or 60 college credits, and 3 = a bachelor's degree or an associated degree and 2 years military or post experience) by agency for six states: Georgia, Florida, North Carolina, Missouri, Tennessee, and West Virginia.



**Figure 2.** 2010 mean annual pay by agency for 10-year veterans in four states.

starting and veterans pay and, when other information was unavailable, to provide pay by rank.

Using matched data from conservation and state patrol agencies in Florida, Georgia, Missouri, North Carolina, Tennessee, and West Virginia, 2010 mean starting pay for rangers was \$32,494, compared to \$34,588 for state patrol officers, despite differences in educational attainment (Figure 1). When 2010 starting pay and education are correlated for rangers and troopers in these states, there is no relationship between education and starting pay ( $R^2 = .003$ ).

Other than in Tennessee, which rewards its more highly-educated 10-year veteran rangers with higher pay, in other states (Florida, Georgia, North Carolina) for which matching data was available, the gap between veteran ranger and state patrol pay grows along with years in service or increases in rank. In 2010, average pay for 10-year conservation veterans in Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee was \$41,164, while the average veteran trooper made \$48,114. In Tennessee, in 2010, veteran rangers made about \$1200 per year more than experienced troopers (Figure 2).

This lack of relationship between education and pay is also demonstrated in survey results from active rangers, who had, on

average, 15 years of experience. In a simple regression analysis using self-reported an annual income, virtually none of the variation in income is explained by education ( $R^2 = .0006$ ), and length of time on the job provides only a partial explanation of variation ( $R^2 = .355$ ). In a multiple regression using ranger survey data, years on the job and education account collectively account for only 13% of variation in pay. The implication, of course, is that other readily measurable factors outside of education and tenure affect pay. Merit could be one of those factors, however, the same trend of lower pay for conservation officers of the same rank holds true in four states for which matched data was available ( Figure 3).

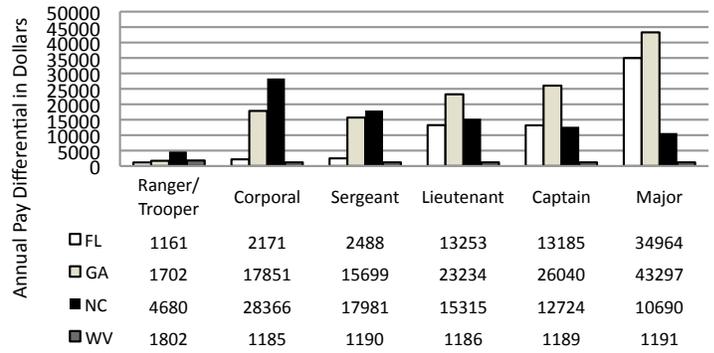
When asked if “perceived inequities in compensation affect [the] agency’s ability to recruit and retain qualified employees,” 94% of survey respondents answered in the affirmative. What could be most worrisome for conservation agencies is the fact that 87% of respondents believe that their wages are unfair in comparison to other law enforcement agencies, and 96% said that inequities in pay affect employee morale. Just over 40% said that they would not recommend their line of work to young people entering the workforce, often because of inequity in pay and opportunities to make more money in other fields of law enforcement.

Respondents were asked to choose from a list of answers or provide an “other” response about the reasons for any perceived inequities in pay. Nearly 86% of respondents chose “Politics influences pay scales in the two agencies.” No one listed “higher risk of the job,” and only one person, who was a high ranking officer at a state agency, explained the difference in pay as due to different education levels. Individual “other” responses to explain inequities in pay fell into five general categories.

- Many state conservation/wildlife agencies are funded by sale of licenses and park fees. Since an appropriation is not made in these states, conservation rangers get shortchanged, while state patrol agencies are more likely to have a defined appropriation that is annually reviewed by the legislature.

- In contrast to state patrol agencies where a law enforcement officer is in charge, conservation agencies are often led by civilians or political appointees who are short-termers and have no desire to “rock the boat” to develop equitable pay and benefits for conservation law enforcement officers, who compose only one small section of a natural resources agency.

- There are more state troopers than conservation rangers in all states, therefore, in states where troopers and rangers work in different state agencies, power in numbers makes a difference when labor is organized or semi-organized. This labor activity, whether union or fraternal, has effectively lobbied for higher pay for state patrol officers. Virginia, for example, has 2080 state troopers and only 182 rangers.



**Figure 3.** Trooper pay in excess of ranger pay in 2010 by rank in four states: Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, and West Virginia

- The visibility of state troopers on the states’ highways enhances their ability to “market” themselves. Rangers have the opposite problem: they most often work in woods or on water, often after regular work hours, and are seen only by the small percentage of population who fish or hunt. In Georgia, state troopers have a post at the Capitol where “model” troopers are posted to further enhance the trooper’s image as professionals.

- There is legislative perception that the job of trooper is more dangerous, while the conservation officers are considered, as one respondent described it, “as recreational police.” One respondent explains that troopers are “perceived to have a larger public safety impact.”

High levels of stress associated with law enforcement schedules and hazardous duty have sometimes been the justification for differences in pay. Of the rangers responding, 57% perceive their jobs to be more dangerous than those of state patrol officers, while 41% saw no difference in hazard. One survey respondent commented on other potential hazards including “wild animals, snakes, falls, and ATV and boating injuries.”

Questions on marital status and on-call duty were asked to assess perceptions about stress. Of 369 rangers who responded, 94% reported that they are on call “24/7.” (These responses do not entirely explain the fact that 49% of survey respondents said that their agencies allow them to work a second law enforcement job.) Another reported indicator of stress for some occupations is a high divorce rate, although divorce has not been authoritatively linked to law enforcement. Approximately 26% of respondents in the survey had been divorced, a rate that corresponds with work by McCoy and Aamodt (2010) that indicates that the divorce rate for fish and game wardens is 25.53%, a rate somewhat higher than the national average of all professions at 16.96%. Some rangers commented on the strained family relationships that result from time away from home and mandatory work at night and on weekends and holidays.

Survey respondents were offered the opportunity to address any other issues. Many of the respondents wrote to express grievances related to lack of parity in pay with other law enforcement officers, especially state patrol officers. A Kentucky ranger commented that troopers make 30% more in starting pay than rangers, despite rangers' extra training and the risks of the job. An Oklahoma ranger wrote: "State troopers in my state make more money starting, have more opportunities for advancement and receiving raises, can retire sooner and with better benefits than game wardens." Another Oklahoman commented that he can barely make ends meet on the pay, and another said that he "didn't begrudge any troopers, but they require half the education and get twice the money." A West Virginian commented that while the state statute provides for length of services raises, the highway patrol's increases are twice as large as for rangers.

"I am tired of being poor," one officer wrote. A Georgian said, "As of September 22, 2011, 122 of 184 of our law enforcement officers, all with more than seven years' experience, made less than an entry level Trooper First Class." A Kentucky ranger added that a trooper with comparable experience makes \$15,000 per year more than he does. A Georgia officer says he loves his job, but he works at four other jobs on his off days to support his modest lifestyle. "Last year," he wrote, "I earned \$100 more than the state allowed for my children to receive free/reduced lunch at school. I see this as a problem after working for 19 years." A Wisconsin ranger reports that a new ranger makes 30 cents less per hour than a 10-year veteran. In Oklahoma, a ranger writes, "Troopers make \$59,000 after seven years of service, while game wardens make approximately \$35,000" for the same tenure. A 36-year veteran in Oklahoma reports that he makes "almost as much as an eight-year trooper." In Michigan, rangers make \$3 per hour less than troopers, despite having "the same training requirements and authority."

Hazards of the job were noted. One ranger wrote, "I have even discouraged my own son from this line of work due to the stress on family life coupled with the low pay and demands." Others commented on the demands of the work, including working alone around armed people often hunting in groups, difficult weather conditions, and a variety of environments from water to woods with responsibility for maintenance of a "broader array of equipment" than other officers. Many troopers, as one Oklahoma officer noted, are required to work all holidays and weekends and many split shifts to enforce the most common types of game and fish violations.

Retirement and promotion differences were also noted. A Virginia ranger noted that troopers get a "hazardous duty supplement of \$10,000 a year added to their retirement," which is not available for rangers. A Georgian reported that "new employees don't get retire-

ment anymore." In Virginia, troopers get promotions due to "time served," while rangers are required to prove merit for promotions.

There is considerable disappointment among some states' rangers in lack of agency leadership efforts to seek pay parity. A Georgian commented that his department has "lost its identity." A ranger from Kentucky wrote, "We are governed by appointed civilians who know nothing about law enforcement . . . and who have us in political debt." Another Kentucky officer commented that agency leadership routinely questions rangers' decisions on the basis of "political correctness," not the law. Rangers from several states expressed concern over their departments' inability to recruit and retain staff, due to low pay in comparison with other law enforcement agencies. One ranger noted hypocrisy in the upper levels of management, who talk about family, "but require us to work three weekends a month." In Wisconsin, a respondent writes that when the legislature took away collective bargaining rights for rangers, troopers retained them.

## Discussion

Using data provided by state agencies, the perception of 98% of responding rangers that their state patrol counterparts make more money is generally accurate for the states studied. There are exceptions, of course: in 2010 Tennessee paid its veteran, degreed rangers about \$1200 more than troopers, but new troopers in Tennessee now make more than new conservation officers; in Missouri, new degreed rangers make \$720 more than state patrol novices. Missouri does not have average veteran pay data for comparison. In the four states for which comparison data was available for veterans and in the pay by rank study in four other states, mean trooper wages for troopers was consistently higher than ranger pay.

This study also provides evidence that education beyond high school, highly valued in most professions, is not a major value when it comes to setting pay scales for law enforcement in the state patrol and conservation ranger agencies surveyed. Hall (1992, 533) described "effective wildlife law enforcement" as a "complicated and academic discipline." Rangers are required to be familiar with biology and their states' criminal and game and fish laws, be able to provide training to hunters and fishers, handle the physical demands of backcountry work, and know how to keep their equipment in good repair. According to rangers surveyed, some states require their rangers to investigate cases, not just make arrests. The failure to reward higher education is a deterrent to retention, since degreed rangers can find better compensation in other areas of work, including local and federal governments.

Of survey respondents, 86% of rangers believe that politics is at play in determination of income for various categories of law enforcement, and they may be right. There are only about a tenth

as many rangers as troopers in the United States, and troopers have long been organized either in unions or fraternal organizations advocating for better pay and benefits. The high visibility of neatly uniformed state troopers through their presence in state Capitol buildings and as guardians of the states' governors and university football coaches has helped these officers position themselves as the states' premier cadre of law enforcement officers. In Georgia, GBI agents, who are required to have a college degree, and conservation officers, 79% of whom have a college degree, have taken exception to this and have actively pursued parity in pay, but with poor results. "The state patrol has just done a better job of marketing themselves," explained one Georgia GBI agent.

Other survey respondents make an important distinction between wildlife law enforcement, led by civilians, and state patrol officers, almost always led by one of their own who has worked through the ranks. Survey respondents believe that the civilians have a poorer understanding of the role of the ranger and are less likely to advocate for them, while state patrol executives are advocating for their fellow officers. The survey respondent who commented that enforcement decisions in his state needed to be "politically correct" demonstrates the low relative value placed on wildlife enforcement. Hall (1992, 533) writes that "game wardens in North America have been stigmatized by the attitudes of common people," and these attitudes are often reflected in the legislative and executive branches of government.

The greatest concerns, outside of the near poverty-pay of some wildlife rangers even after 10 or more years of service, are two-fold. First, ongoing lack of parity in pay with other state law enforcement agencies will further erode morale in conservation agencies. Already, it is evident in the survey that in states where pay parity is a problem, rangers are dissatisfied and vocal about it. Based on the high number of survey responses from certain states, some agencies clearly have a problem already, although they might not have viewed pay parity as an issue. Second, morale problems often translate into a less effective workforce and high turnover, and, as the economy improves, finding qualified and experienced replacements for experienced rangers will be difficult.

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