

Classified and Support Staff Council Report to the
Kansas Board of Regents

February 15, 2012

Submitted by Lesa Reves, K-State Classified Senate
and CSSC President

Good afternoon. It is again an honor to be here today to give you a report from the Classified and Support Staff Council. Each of the over 4000 classified and support staff employees have a story to tell, but today you will get to hear just a part of my story.

As a state employee I can testify the whole benefits package the state offers to their workers. When I began working at the K-State Dairy in 1993, I was a wife of two years and mother to a four month old son. As was our dream to have more children, in the fall of 1994 I gave birth to a beautiful daughter. Several months earlier we found out she had a birth defect that was picked up on a routine sonogram. For 16 day of her short life as a patient at Children's Mercy Hospital in Kansas City she required two nurses for 24 hour care in the NICU, one nurse for

her and one to watch the machine used to re-oxygenate her blood. As you can guess by now, my husband and I went home not only with empty arms but also funeral and medical expenses. The bill for Children's Mercy alone was over a ¼ of a million dollars. The total we paid for the medical care for me and my daughter that year was less \$1,400. 17 years ago the co-pays and deductibles along with the cost of living were much less than they are today. Even though my husband and I were both state employees at that time, we still struggled with these expenses taking a year of monthly installments to pay off our debt at the hospital. Since that time the cost of insurance and deductibles continue to rise along with the cost of goods for all state employees. We have good pay and benefits, but we have had better with regards to the overall cost of living. The package deal the state offers classified employees continues to be whittled away at just enough every year to cause grumbling among those affected, but not enough to drive off employees in droves. So, is that good enough for those in power? Padding their own pockets at the suffrage of those who struggle to

make ends meet? I think we as a state can do better. The economy is starting to turn around as those working poor spend everything they make to stimulate the economy. But if the state legislature refuses to reinstate market adjustments and fund badly needed cost of living adjustments this year, we as classified employees are forced to wait another year to plead our case for these adjustments for the next fiscal year.

In an article in *U.S. News and World Report*, Kansas is ranked 49th out of 51 in the United States for salary compensation for state employees dropping from 48th place last year. Is this the kind of press we want for our state?

Last year, the Governor had the money in his budget for market adjustments, took it out of his budget and then ended the year with a surplus of millions of dollars that would have more than paid for the market adjustments. This “lapse” in the Market Adjustment as the Governor put it for FY 2012 and 2013 sends a clear message to classified employees and it is not a positive one.

Even though the Board of Regents does not decide classified employee salaries and benefits, the board chose to agree with the Governor siding for “no general salary increases recommended for state employees, including no market adjustments for classified employees”. This is cited from your own budget report to the Governor as the final bullet point. I would respectfully ask in the future if you cannot stand with us on these issues, please do not stand against us. If you would like to speak up for us, please consider the suggestion I gave you in my report last fall to approve an exemption for the Board of Regent’s Universities to give each university the freedom and flexibility to give bonuses to classified employees without restrictions from the Governor or Legislature.

In closing, I would like to thank the Board of Regents for allowing the Classified and Support Staff Council a voice in this process today. And for me personally, it has been a pleasure and an honor for me to address you. Thank you.