

**2005-Montana Detention Officer 20 Year Retirement Proposal**  
**MSPOA Legislative Summary**  
#LC0354

**\*\*Detention Officers are the only "criminal justice-law enforcement" officers left out of a 20 yr. Retirement\*\***

Detention Officers working in the State of Montana are the only, "*Front-Line*", criminal justice professionals who are not in a twenty year retirement system. State Correctional Officers; Fish, Wildlife and Parks Officers; Highway Patrol Officers; Department of Transportation Officers; local Police Officers and Sheriff Deputies are all enrolled in twenty year retirement systems, but not Detention Officers. The twenty-year retirement program is provided for those disciplines where their normal course of work is high risk and/or high stress. No one can argue that the day-to-day work of any Detention Officer does not expose them to constant high risk and stress.

**\*\*Increasing recruitment and retention issues\*\***

Detention Officer recruiting and retention has become an increasingly troublesome and costly issue for Sheriff's Offices. With most jurisdictions experiencing a high turn-over rate (20% to 100%) of Detention Officers annually, the issue is becoming one of liability and costs. In a field that is becoming more litigious, combined with increasingly dangerous prisoners/inmates, the constant turn-over and the staffing of facilities with inexperienced Detention Officers is exposing the staff of our Facilities and the Counties to increasing liability. Aside from the "danger" issue, the "costs" of continually training new Officers is becoming increasingly burdensome to Counties. In Yellowstone County, just the "salary" costs of paying a new Officer during their "training" time is over \$4,700.00. Multiplied by the number of replacement Officers per year and the amount of costs to the County can be substantial.

**\*\*On-Going disadvantage in retaining experienced staff\*\***

Obviously there are various reasons for Detention Officers terminations, but increasingly Officers are "moving" to other Criminal Justice positions, with less stress and greater retirement benefits. Over the last ten to twenty years there has been a remarkable increase in salaries and working conditions for detention Officers throughout the State, yet the turn-over rate continues to increase. In an area that is becoming a "career" field, we are losing more and more, good, qualified Officers to other agencies that offer less stress and risks, with better retirement.

**\*\*Long Term Cost Savings\*\***

Transferring the Montana Detention Officers to the Sheriff's Retirement System is not only logical and reasonable, but the right thing to do. The increased costs to the Counties is off-set by the reduction of training costs, eliminating increased salary rates for Officers between their 20<sup>th</sup> and 30 years of employment and by maintaining a trained, experienced work force, reducing liability exposure. The attached spreadsheet illustrates the salary cost savings and is based on Dawson County present pay level. The "training" salary costs is base on 2004 Yellowstone County numbers.

If you have any questions, please contact the MSPOA Office (443-5669) or your local/nearest MSPOA Board Member. Please support and become a "proponent" of the Detention Officer Retirement Bill.

YELLOWTONE COUNTY DETENTION FACILITY  
SALARY TRAINING COSTS  
2004

6 weeks On-the-Job Training (OJT) @ \$13.19 per hour	=	\$3,165.60
3 weeks Correction/Detention Officer Basic @ MLEA	=	<u>\$1,582.80</u>
Initial Detention Officer training <u>salary</u> costs	=	<b>\$4,748.40</b>
(16 Detention Officers replaced in 2004; Total Salary costs =		\$75,974.40)

RETIREMENT SYSTEM COMPARISON  
(From attached spread sheet)

Employer Contributions

30 year PERS

\$53,232.60

20 year SRS

\$69,318.74

Difference paid by employer:

\$16,086.14

Wages Paid:

1<sup>st</sup> through 10<sup>th</sup> years

\$232,831.22

20<sup>th</sup> through 30<sup>th</sup> years

\$288,671.00

Difference paid in salaries:

\$55,839.78

**SAVINGS TO COUNTY:**

**\$39,753.64**

*Additional Summary and Facts*

From Gallatin County Fiscal Department:

- The SRS Retirement system for Detention Officers will attract and retain quality employees.*
- An incentive for existing employees*
- Detention Officers will not be "penalized" for transferring within the Department or to another Law Enforcement agency, regardless if it is State or Local.*
- It will slow turnover.*

From Lewis and Clark Fiscal Department:

- Will be able to maintain a "younger" work force rather than an aging one*
- Would reduce the potential of Work-Comp claims of "older" Officers*
- Would also decrease the County "costs" to the individuals retirement fund*
  - The increased contribution to the SRS system for 1 to 20 years over the PERS contribution for that period of time is **\$13,515.31***
  - The cost for continuing to contribute to the PERS system from 20 to 30 years is **\$19,629.52***
  - The net savings to the County on the individual retirement contribution is: **\$6,114.21***

