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Nevada elected officials to get pay raises Jan. 1

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Nevada constitutional officers and legislators will get a 6 percent pay raise Jan. 1 because of a law that ties their salaries to those of classified state workers.

The 5-year-old law mandates that elected officials get raises equal to those given to state classified employees over the previous four years. State workers received 2 percent in July 2007 and 4 percent in July 2008, the Nevada Appeal reported Thursday.

At the same time, the state Constitution says no elected official's salary may be increased or decreased during his term in office.

"They take office in January and we can't pass a law until February at the earliest, so they're in the middle of their new term," said Andrew Clinger, Department of Administration director. "You can't change their salary in the middle of a new term."

Clinger said state payroll must add the raises to the checks of every elected official from the governor to members of the Assembly.

Those elected officials can, however, voluntarily return the cash to the state or donate it to charity.

All six constitutional officers returned or donated amounts equal to 4.6 percent of their pay since furloughs were implemented, to match the reductions suffered by state workers over the past two years, according to the controller's office.

Letters are being mailed to those officials telling them how they can do the same with the 6 percent raises if they choose, a spokesman said.

For Gov.-elect Brian Sandoval, the raise will increase his pay more than \$8,500 a year to \$149,573. Clinger said Sandoval has already advised him he will be returning that increase to the state treasury.

Attorney General Catherine Cortez Masto's pay will rise from \$133,000 to \$141,086. Secretary of State Ross Miller, Treasurer Kate Marshall and Controller

Kim Wallin would all see increases from \$97,000 to \$102,898, and Lt. Gov. Brian Krolicki from \$60,000 to \$63,648.

The raises also increase pay for members of the Nevada Legislature. Assembly members and senators will see an increase to \$146.29 per day, up from \$130, effective with the start of the 2011 session. Legislators only receive salaries for the first 60 days of each regular session.

Clinger said his office submitted a bill during the 2009 Legislature to change the law and prevent elected officials from getting raises this January.

SB420 was heard in the Senate Finance Committee May 12 and again May 18. Deputy Budget Director Stephanie Day testified the bill would defer the January 2011 increase so that constitutional officers beginning their terms that date would take the same pay reductions imposed on other state workers.

Minutes of the hearing show Senate Majority Leader Steven Horsford, D-North Las Vegas, said he would oppose the bill unless current constitutional officers also took the cuts. No action was taken and the measure died in the committee.

"They could have done something about it two years ago and they didn't," Clinger said. "They can't do it now."

Information from: Nevada Appeal, <http://www.nevadaappeal.com>