



*INTERDEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE  
LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU*

---

## **Memorandum**

**To:** Ald. Robert G. Donovan  
**From:** Michael Talarczyk, Legislative Fiscal Analyst  
**Date:** June 25, 2008  
**Re:** Retired Officer Programs

---

This memorandum is provided in response to your request for information on municipalities that have programs in place to specifically recruit and employ retired police officers on a part-time basis.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Three cities of relevant size have distinctly different programs in place to employ the services of retired law enforcement personnel. Houston, Texas, recruits retired officers to serve as civilian employees performing various duties depending on the division in which they are assigned. In Omaha, Nebraska, retired officers are sworn members of the police department with full enforcement powers. However, these officers are placed in areas where use of those powers is unlikely - serving largely in either a front desk or school resource capacity. Finally, typically assigned to high visibility foot patrols, reserve officers in Reno, Nevada, are sworn members of the department, carry firearms, and assume responsibilities commensurate with this role.

A discussion of some of the inherent advantages of hiring retired law enforcement personnel is presented next, followed by more detailed explanations of retired officer programs in Houston, Omaha and Reno.

### **RETIRED OFFICER PROGRAM ADVANTAGES**

The two main advantages of hiring retired police officers are experience and cost.

Retired law enforcement personnel bring to the table the breadth and depth of knowledge of seasoned, tenured police officers. The fact that these candidates are in

paid retirement status by definition means they have been exposed to the culture and day-to-day workings of a police department, and have a wealth of relevant practical experiences to draw upon. By enlisting the services of these retired individuals, a police department is able to take advantage of invaluable experience that would otherwise not be available.

Participants in retired officer programs are hired on a part-time basis with no benefits. Because program participants are retired in good standing, each already has in place requisite health insurance and a pension. Employing these individuals on a part-time basis ensures that their full retirement benefits are in no way adversely affected. This setup has obvious financial benefits for the hiring police departments.

The end result is a “win-win” situation. The police department gains the services of experienced law enforcement officers at a markedly reduced cost. The participants, many recently retired, are able to fulfill a desire to continue to “serve” in some capacity while earning supplemental income. Further, because the part-time status limits the amount of work hours, participants are allowed the flexibility to continue to fulfill their respective personal objectives as retired individuals.

## **HOUSTON: EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM FOR RETIRED OFFICERS**

Beginning in 2006, the Houston Police Department instituted the Employment Program for Retired Officers (“EPRO”). The impetus of the program was the need amongst several divisions for additional support in performing various classified and non-classified functions. Hiring retired, experienced law enforcement personnel allowed the department to supplement staffing in a cost-effective way while maintaining the integrity of the work performed.

EPRO employees are given the civilian job classification of Administrative Coordinator and work in specialized divisions including Homicide, Robbery, Juvenile, Identification, Traffic Enforcement, Human Resources, Crisis Intervention Team, Legal Services and the Graffiti Unit. Assigned tasks may include administrative and technical support, inventorying tagged property, preliminary interviews, cold case review, homicide hold desk, crime analysis and civilian background investigations.

Currently, the Houston Police Department employs a total of 54 EPRO employees, a considerable increase from the 26 hired upon program implementation 2 years ago. Officer Tran Nguyen-Walker, Human Resources, Civilian Employment Unit, is confident the number will continue to grow due to the overall popularity of the program. EPRO participants now earn \$28.84 per hour, which is roughly equal to full-time officer pay. However, EPRO employees receive no benefits.

Applicants to the EPRO project must be “honorably retired from a law enforcement agency.” The program’s popularity has effectively negated any formal recruiting of retired officers. Officer Nguyen-Walker indicates that there is not only a strong supply of retired officers in and around the greater Houston area, but that many full-time

officers have asked to be put on a “list” for consideration to the program upon retirement.

As a majority of hires are recent retirees from the Houston Police Department, there is no training program per se. Rather, job-specific training is left to the discretion of each participating division. EPRO employees are limited to no more than 10 hours per day and 30 hours per week and are also limited by the number of work hours allowed by the division and the project itself. Typically, EPRO employees average 15 hours per week. It is not uncommon for divisions to share the services of an EPRO employee.

## **OMAHA: PART-TIME POLICE OFFICER**

For roughly 8 years, the Omaha Police Department has staffed a variety of non-patrol duties with qualified retired personnel. According to Deputy Chief Mark Sundermeier, the staffing, more a solution than a program, was necessitated by a situation familiar to metropolitan police departments. With the push to get as many able uniformed police officers on the street, administrative staffing and production fell behind. “Light-duty” officers placed in these administrative-type positions proved unreliable, making it difficult for the department to formulate a Monday through Friday work schedule. As a result, the Omaha Police Department turned to hiring retired police officers on a part-time basis to fill these roles.

Qualified applicants must have been on retirement status for at least 6 months and have Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) certification in Nebraska. A majority of the part-time police officer hours are spent assisting the front desk at Police Headquarters and serving as School Resource Officers (SROs). Part-time police officers may also perform a variety of administrative responsibilities within the Telephone Response Squad, Information Services Section, Crime Prevention Training, Police Training, Research and Planning and Event Security areas.

Applicants to the position tend to be recent retirees from the Omaha Police Department. Formal recruitment is minimal – typically word-of-mouth or an announcement in the Union newspaper. Occasionally, the department will poll recent retirees on their interest in returning. Because recruits tend to be freshly retired, there is no formal training program.

Part-time police officers are sworn members of the Omaha Police Department but do not carry weapons. As such, though they have full enforcement powers, they are not placed in areas that typically require full enforcement responsibilities.

Compensation ranges between \$11 and \$25 per hour with no benefits. Pay at the higher end of this range is generally associated with SRO grants. Part-time police officers average 20 hours per week and are limited to no more than 32 hours per week. Currently, there are 22 part-time police officers employed by the Omaha Police Department.

## **RENO: RESERVE OFFICER PROGRAM**

In 1995, Reno downtown property owners formed a special tax district to fund additional police officers to be assigned to downtown bike and foot patrols. Shortly thereafter, the Reno Police Department began to recruit qualified retired law enforcement personnel as a partial staffing solution to this newly created "Downtown Enforcement Team."

As part of the Downtown Enforcement Team, Reserve Officers are typically limited to high visibility uniformed foot patrol, but may also serve as security in city center homeless shelters. Enforcement activities are kept to a minimum to ensure Reserve Officers remain visible and on the street. However, these positions do have the authority to make misdemeanor arrests and place individuals in civil protective custody. Reserve Officers do not conduct investigations, issue reports, gather evidence, drive vehicles or carry shotguns.

Recruitment for the program is accomplished primarily through word-of-mouth and the City of Reno web site. Prospective applicants must be in paid retirement status for a minimum of 90 days from a federal, state or local law enforcement agency. Candidates cannot be retired for more than 5 years, must pass a physical and be capable of walking foot patrols for extended periods of time. Successful applicants must obtain a Basic Nevada POST certificate within one year of hire. Applications for the Reserve Officer program tend to come primarily from residents of Reno and the surrounding area, including northern California.

Befitting the position's responsibilities, Reserve Officers are sworn members of the department and carry side arms. Currently, the Reno Police Department has 18 Reserve Officers, who are paid an hourly wage of \$22.72. Compensation is adjusted annually, but can never exceed that of full-time police officers. To ensure that total annual compensation does not impact retirement benefits, Reserve Officers work no more than 17.5 hours per week. Reserve Officers are not covered by Civil Service regulations or labor union representation. Per Sergeant Steve O'Farrell of the Reno Police Department, the program has been a success, with a waiting list existing to fill any future vacancies.

Should you have any questions or desire further information, general or city specific, on this topic, please contact the Bureau.

LRB08323