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## DEPARTMENT OF STATE CIVIL SERVICE

# NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release:

May 7, 2009

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### **State Civil Service Commission Proposes Suspending Merit Increases**

The State Civil Service Commission announced today that it will meet in June to consider a proposal to suspend state officials' authority to grant 4% merit pay increases to classified state employees for the next year.

"The classified service was established to ensure that our citizens receive efficient and effective services from their state government. One of the goals of the classified system is to promote sound and prudent use of the tax dollars paid to state employees to deliver those services," said James A. Smith, Chairman of the Commission. "Today, our state and our nation are suffering extraordinary financial difficulties. Our state government is facing an unprecedented budget crisis in the coming fiscal year. These difficult and challenging times call for fiscal prudence and shared sacrifice among all of us who serve our fellow citizens," Smith said.

The looming budget shortfalls may require the reduction of some state services and possible layoffs of state employees. "If salary increases are granted to employees during fiscal year 2009/2010 the result may increase the need to conduct layoffs," said Commissioner Burl Cain. "Stopping salary increases could help save some employees' jobs," Cain said.

The proposal would suspend state agencies' authority to award merit increases for one year, beginning July 1, 2009. "By taking this action," Smith said, "we would ensure that the sacrifice necessitated by our state's current financial crisis is borne equally by all." Since the Commission does not regulate pay of unclassified state employees such as executives, faculty or medical professionals, Smith said they will ask other elected and appointed state officials to follow the Commission's lead and consider suspending raises for those employees as well next year.

Commissioner Lee Griffin said the Commission plans to work during the next year to revise the current system to place greater emphasis on pay for performance. Griffin said the Commission expects all managers in state government to exert greater efforts to better evaluate employee performance. "We must all be accountable to our citizens for responsible management and delivery of effective service," Griffin said.

The Commission will consider the proposal to suspend next year's merit increases at a public hearing in Baton Rouge on June 3, 2009.

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