

**FINAL MINUTES**  
**INDEPENDENT CITIZENS COMMISSION**

December 30, 2014

---

The Independent Citizens Commission met Tuesday December 30, 2014, at 8:30 a.m., in Room 272, State Capitol, Little Rock, Arkansas.

Commission members present: Chair-Mr. Larry Ross, Vice Chair-Mr. Chuck Banks, Mr. Mitch Berry, Ms. Barbara Graves, Mr. Stuart Hill, Ms. Brenda James, and Mr. Stephen Tipton.

Chair Ross, called the meeting to order and acknowledged Commission members, Mr. Brandon Robinson, Office of the Attorney General, and Ms. Melanie Jenkins, Commission Staff. Chairman Ross also stated in his opening remarks that with a vision to see, courage to act, and faith to trust, the Independent Citizens Commission will adhere to the FOIA, and there will be an open, honest, transparent and inclusive assessment process with appropriate input from the public.

**Consideration of Minutes from the December 16, 2014, Commission Meeting**

**A motion was made by Commissioner Tipton and seconded by Commissioner Berry to approve the minutes. The motion carried without objection.**

**Review of Arkansas' Economy (Handouts 1-2)**

Dr. John Shelnett, Research Administrator, Economic Analysis and Tax Research, Department of Finance and Administration (DFA), presented an overview of current economic conditions, a biennial forecast and the economic recovery progress for the State of Arkansas. Commissioner Berry requested additional information on Arkansas' covered employment annual wage average of \$38,941.

Dr. Shelnett advised this is mandated reporting by employers; therefore it is a good overall representation of the employment wage average for the state and includes all part time and full time jobs. Commissioner Banks asked if the state is in sufficient financial shape to fund changes, hypothetically upward changes, and whether or not the money is there and will the money be there in the future. Dr. Shelnett stated that Brandon Sharp, DFA Office of Budget, could address these types of questions.

**Historical Overview of Compensation for Executive, Legislative, and Judicial Branches:**

Mr. Ernie Dumas presented historical information from 1874 to the present on salaries and other compensations, whether ethical or not, that legislators and elected officials received. Often officials are compensated for their low salaries in other ways such as per diem and other expense reimbursements. Commissioner Berry asked for additional information regarding Amendment 70 and a brief history of judicial salaries. Mr. Dumas stated that in 1974, judicial salaries were handed over to the legislature. Mr. Dumas also added that this commission is probably the most powerful commission in the history of the state because the Amendment specifies the commission decides whether or not to go to the legislature for appropriation. Mr. Dumas' understanding from reading the Amendment is that the decision by this commission will come directly from general revenue. Vice Chairman Banks asked for clarity that the money used for salaries will not affect education or other such programs and that the money comes from a special fund and there is no competition. Mr. Dumas clarified that there is

always competition but the money the commission designates comes from general revenue and comes out of treasury.

### **Commission Discussion (Handout 3)**

Chairman Ross presented a handout of items to consider in response to Commissioner Graves' inquiries regarding additional information on the amount of time spent on the job, is it still part time or is it full time, has the job grown over the years, and what other compensations are given as well as Health Insurance. Commissioner Berry added that they would also need to know from all of the positions under review what other benefits these offices receive in order to paint a truer picture. Chairman Ross requested that an appropriate person from each benefit area present to the commission in order to quantify the benefits and the total compensation package. Commissioner Graves asked that the information be presented by base salary, pension, and health benefits. At the request of Commissioner Banks, all available handouts will be sent to commissioners for review prior to the meeting. Chairman Ross commented on his handout that it was a starting point for the information needed and that this was going to take time to make these decisions. It was suggested that an invitation be extended to all office holders whose salaries are under review.

Commissioner Hill requested information on mileage and per diem rates from states similar to Arkansas. Vice Chairman Banks suggested that members also conduct research on their own and share with the commission. Chairman Ross asked Brandon Robinson if the commission was unable to make a decision by the deadline, could the pay be made retroactive. Mr. Robinson will research this, as it is not addressed in the law. The commission asked that the next meeting attendees include the Senate Pro Tempore and Speaker of the House to give a presentation on their reimbursements, etc., Judicial Council, and Brandon Sharp to give a presentation on the state of Arkansas along with the executive branch information.

Commissioner Tipton inquired about the process of getting public input. Chairman Ross stated the commission will receive public input somehow but, at this time, the commission is not ready yet. This could be an agenda item for the January 14, 2015, meeting.

Chairman Ross stated that Ms. Jenkins is looking into other locations for upcoming meetings.

Upcoming meeting dates are as follows:

Wednesday, January 7, 2015 - Location TBD

Wednesday, January 14, 2015 - Location TBD

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:45 a.m.