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# State's payroll falls — slightly — for first time in years

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**Governor Charlie Baker, a Republican who took office in January 2015, has taken steps to rein in state spending and help close budget gaps.**

By [Matt Rocheleau](#)

GLOBE STAFF JANUARY 31, 2017

The Massachusetts state payroll declined slightly in 2016, marking its first decrease in at least 16 years, according to recently compiled data.

While the overall payroll shrunk, the state continued to dole out increasing sums to cover overtime, buyouts, and other types of pay beyond standard wages.

The dip in the state payroll was driven by a reduction in the workforce. Governor Charlie Baker, a Republican who took office in January 2015, has taken steps to [rein in state spending](#) and help close budget gaps, including a [hiring freeze](#) and an [early retirement program](#).

“It’s definitely a positive sign,” said Mary Connaughton, director of government transparency at the Pioneer Institute, a nonprofit think tank that supports limited government. “One of the largest parts of the state’s budget is salaries, and trying to control that is no easy challenge.”



## State’s payroll falls — slightly — for first time in years

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Overall, \$6.865 billion was spent on state worker salaries in 2016. That represented a 0.6 percent decline — or \$38.8 million — from 2015.

## Chart: The 100 highest-paid Mass. state workers in 2016

Top top-paid state worker in 2016 made more than \$1 million.

## **16 state workers made \$100k or more in OT pay last year**

**Graphics: A look at Mass. state payroll, by department**

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The 2016 payroll represented nearly 18 percent of the state's \$39 billion budget.

State Comptroller Thomas Shack said that it marked the first time the payroll had shrunk since at least 2000. He said that records for earlier years could not be easily compared because they are paper-based.

The figures do not account for some independent state agencies that handle their own payrolls, such as the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority. State payroll [data](#) going back to 2010 is published on a website the state comptroller's office [recently launched](#) to promote transparency.

The number of workers on the state payroll, which includes some people who only worked for the state briefly and collected small sums, was 126,126 last year, down from 126,692 in 2015.

Much of the cost cutting came from the Department of Transportation, the Department of Revenue, the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, and the Trial Court system.

"The Baker-Polito administration is pleased to have reduced the state's bureaucracy, saving hundreds of millions for taxpayers, and will continue to pursue effective cost savings and fiscally responsible budget solutions to support the Commonwealth," said Baker spokesman Brendan Moss.

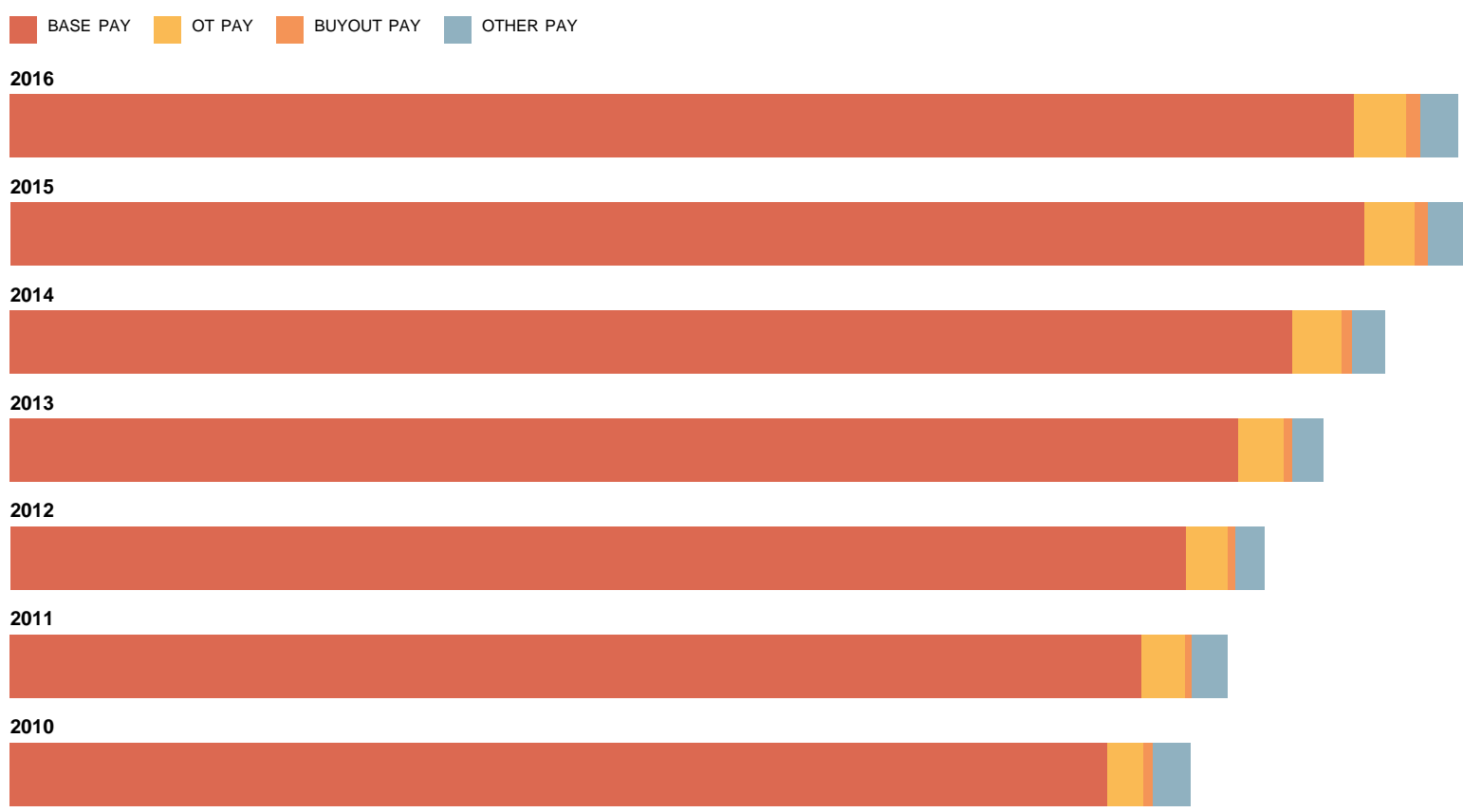
Baker and Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito recently [opted not to take a pay raise for themselves](#).



(Baker made \$151,800 in 2016; Polito made \$122,058.)

The Baker administration’s ability to cut personnel costs is limited because chunks of the state’s payroll — such as state colleges and universities — are not under the governor’s direct control. Even within the executive branch, the governor’s administration sets the salaries for only a small percentage of workers because many are covered by union contracts.

### Massachusetts state payroll, 2010 to 2016



SOURCE: Office of the Comptroller

Massachusetts spent more than \$250 million on overtime pay, up by \$5.4 million from 2015. Statewide spending on buyouts also rose from \$68.9 million to \$69.6 million.

And, “other” pay — which includes standby pay, shift differential, roll call pay, police detail, and stipends — rose from \$173 million to \$183 million.

Overtime spending by the Department of Correction was up by \$6.9 million. Department spokesman Christopher Fallon attributed the increase to pay raises under collective bargaining and to more employees using leave benefits last year than they did in 2015.

Those posts are sometimes filled by having other employees work overtime, he said, adding that use of such leave time tends to fluctuate each year.

State Police, which typically spends more each year on overtime pay than any other department, spent \$46.2 million in overtime in 2016, an increase of \$2.5 million from the previous year.

State Police spokesman David Procopio said troopers are often needed to work overtime to respond to “critical or ongoing incidents such as investigations into violent crimes, searches for missing persons and children, and storm and disaster response ... [and] for court appearances necessary to ensure charged individuals whom they have investigated and arrested are held accountable.”

The Pioneer Institute’s Connaughton said that the state should look into ways to lower overtime costs.

“That would be another opportunity to see if there can be further savings,” she said.

The average pay among all state workers last year was about \$54,343, slightly lower than the average in 2015 of \$54,419.

(By comparison, the average pay for all private and public workers in Massachusetts was \$59,010 in May of 2015, the most recent figures available from the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics. That was up from \$57,610 in May of 2014.)

Yet the number of well-paid state workers continued to climb, albeit at a slower rate than in [previous years](#).

State data show that 13,573 workers earned \$100,000 or more in 2016, up from 13,265 in 2015

The University of Massachusetts system, like in previous years, accounted for most of the highest-paid state workers overall.

The UMass system employs many more people than any other department, and its \$1.35 billion payroll last year, similar to previous years, was the largest of any department in the state by a wide margin. Its payroll grew by the largest sum of any department — \$40 million — which university

officials said was due to increase in collective bargaining obligations.

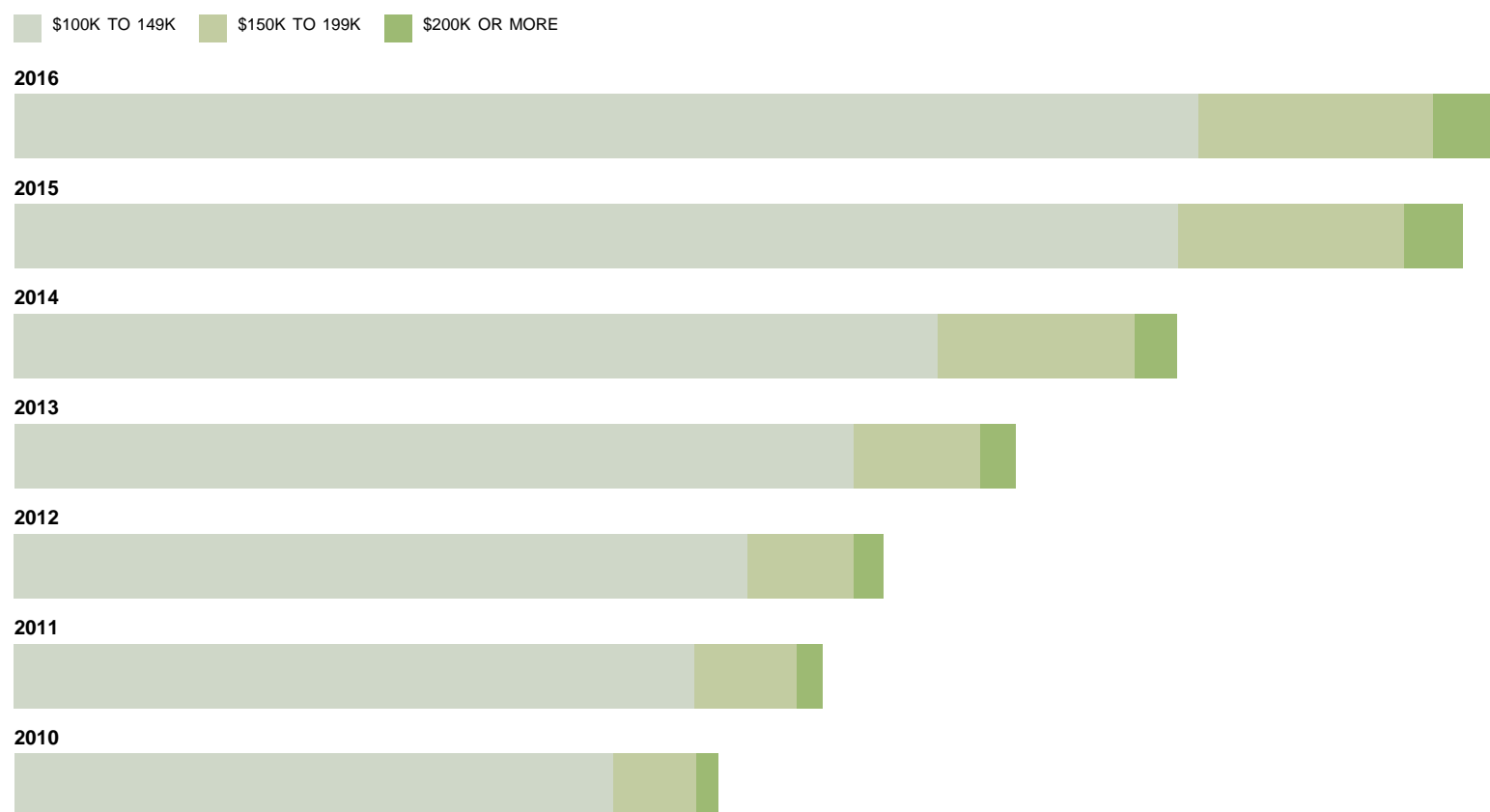
UMass spokesman Jeff Cournoyer said that only 22 percent of UMass' total revenue comes from state tax dollars. Cournoyer said the expansion of UMass' payroll in recent years is consistent with its growth in numerous areas, including student enrollment, that has driven the hiring of new faculty and staff.

“UMass is a world-class university system conducting \$629 million annually in life-changing research, generating \$6.2 billion in annual economic impact — a 12-1 return on its state appropriation — and is not only one of the largest employers in the state but contributes more than any other institution to the state's overall workforce” Cournoyer said in an e-mail.

The highest paid state worker, for the third straight year, was UMass' basketball coach Derek Kellogg, who earned about \$1,063,678 in 2016.

The next highest was UMass Medical School chancellor Michael Collins who made \$938,075 in 2016.

#### Number of state workers earning \$100k or more



SOURCE: Office of the Comptroller  
MATT ROCHELEAU/GLOBE STAFF

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