



Bruins 3, Penguins 4, Final

Massachusetts state payroll grows to \$7.4 billion

By [Matt Rocheleau](#) Globe Staff, Updated January 7, 2020, 4:35 p.m.



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The Massachusetts state payroll climbed to \$7.4 billion last year, an increase of 3.4 percent over the previous year, according to new data from the state comptroller's office.

The number of state workers earning six figures grew by more than 10 percent [from 2018](#), according to [the data](#). Last year, about 18,680 people took home \$100,000 or more, up from 16,940 the previous year.

About 960 employees took home at least \$200,000, including 17 who made a half-million dollars or more.

Overall, overtime spending ballooned to nearly \$303 million, an increase of about 4.4 percent from 2018. Forty-nine workers made upward of \$100,000 in overtime pay alone.

None of these figures account for spending by the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, which has historically been accounted for separately, or spending by quasi-public state agencies, such as the Massachusetts Port Authority, which handle their payrolls separately and for the most part have not yet released figures covering all of 2019.

The list of the highest-paid state workers last year was dominated by University of Massachusetts employees, as it has been in previous years.

The highest-paid employee was Michael Collins, UMass Medical School chancellor and senior vice president for health science, who made \$1,096,430 last year, a 2.5 percent increase from what he took home in 2018.

He was followed by:

- Terence Flotte, UMass Medical School dean, provost, and executive deputy chancellor, who made \$1,076,817;
- Matthew McCall, UMass men's head basketball coach, who made \$827,000;
- Michael Green, UMass Medical School vice provost for research and strategic initiatives and director of the Cancer Center, who made \$741,960; and

- Martin Meehan, UMass system president, who made \$682,270.

Former state inspector general Gregory Sullivan, now a research director at the Pioneer Institute, criticized the high pay figures at UMass.

“There’s no reason in my mind why the top officials at UMass should be paid 50 percent or more above like-kind positions in state government,” he said.

“You don’t see a similar pattern at the state colleges and universities for example,” Sullivan added. “UMass is nirvana for state employees. Everyone wants to go there because the pay is so great.”

The UMass system is by far the largest state department in terms of the number of people it employs, and the system is the most costly in terms of payroll.

Overall, the system’s payroll grew by about 3.8 percent last year, which amounted to a \$54 million increase in payroll spending for the five campuses — the largest year-over-year increase in state government.

A UMass spokesman didn’t immediately have a comment.

The next largest payroll spending jump at any agency, \$21.8 million, was at the Department of Transportation, which was an 8 percent increase. A spokeswoman for MassDOT attributed the hike to \$8.2 million worth of retroactive pay doled out as part of a union agreement update. She also said the RMV added about 15 full-time positions last year and spent about \$700,000 for overtime work to catch up on notices about drivers convicted of serious offenses that the agency failed to process for years, including for a troubled driver the RMV should have suspended shortly before he allegedly caused a crash that killed seven people in New Hampshire in June.

The Trial Court saw its payroll spending rise by \$19.7 million, or 4 percent. That included a 48 percent increase in the court's overtime pay which reached \$2.6 million. Court spokeswoman Jennifer Donahue attributed the increased overtime spending to payments the court made last year to reduce balances of accrued compensatory time for security and facilities employees.

Elsewhere, the Department of Correction's payroll increased by \$15.2 million, or 4 percent. That agency [has seen a dramatic rise in overtime spending](#) for correctional officers in recent years, even though Massachusetts has the country's lowest incarceration rate and the state prison population has dropped significantly during that time.

"Collective bargaining unit agreements, position vacancies, and staff retirements have triggered an increased use of overtime and have been significant cost drivers at DOC," said department spokeswoman Cara Savelli. "There has also been a need for more staffing stemming from criminal justice reforms. To boost staff and reduce overtime the DOC has recently put four recruit classes through its Academy, resulting in more than 400 new and incoming officers on the job."

The Executive Office of Technology Services and Security saw a \$9.4 million jump in its payroll, a 27 percent surge from the previous year that included a sharp rise in overtime spending. But a spokeswoman for that office said that was attributed to a larger reorganization in which the office absorbed IT staff from other areas of state government. Overall, the impact on taxpayers is net neutral, she said.

The median pay for all state workers last year was \$57,931, compared with \$57,185 in 2018. The highest-paid state worker outside UMass was the chief medical examiner, Mindy Hull, who collected \$395,757.

The state's payroll, which represents about 17 percent of Massachusetts' overall \$43 billion budget, has risen virtually every year for nearly two decades. Workforce reductions caused payroll spending to [dip slightly in 2016](#).

Governor Charlie Baker, who made \$185,000 last year, has taken steps to rein in state spending and help close budget gaps. His office said in a statement the administration “reduced executive branch headcount by over 2,100 employees since taking office, saving the Commonwealth’s taxpayers money and reducing bureaucracy.”

However, much of the payroll isn’t under the governor’s direct control. For example, state colleges and universities account for large chunks of the payroll, while the pay rates of many other state workers are dictated by union contracts.

Outside observers said the overall increase in 2019 was largely consistent with prior years and what would be expected given the broader economic environment in Massachusetts. Still, they urged state officials to keep spending in check.

"As stewards of taxpayer dollars, it is critically important at the agency level that managers continually review and improve business processes and leverage technology to reduce operating costs whenever possible while improving service delivery," said Eileen McAnney, president of the Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation.

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