

Public workers a burden to taxpayers in retirement

By Brad Branan, Sacramento Bee

The highest-paid local government official in the capital region last year worked just eight months as city manager in Lincoln, a suburb of 40,000.

A separation agreement with the city allowed James Estep to collect severance worth six months of pay and benefits, as well as money for unused leave time, putting his total pay for the year at \$470,000, more than three times his base pay for the time he worked.

While Estep represents the extreme, his story shows a key aspect of how local government employees are compensated. Base salary makes up just a portion of each employee's take-home pay, which can also include credit for unused vacation, allowances for uniforms and other job costs, and overtime pay. Collectively the extra pay can add up quickly, especially when an employee retires and cashes out his or her unused benefits.

The 50 highest-paid local government officials in Sacramento, Yolo, El Dorado and Placer counties made an average of \$265,000 last year, and one-third of the income was from special pay, the *Bee* analysis found. The income does not include employer payments for health care or pensions.

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