

Groundskeepers Still Earning \$28K After 20 Years as Lawmakers Slam DSPR Pay and Push Back on Governor's Lawsuit

With Sports, Parks, and Recreation groundskeepers earning just \$28K after two decades, lawmakers denounced the department's pay structure and defended the \$35K wage bill, calling the governor's legal challenge a blow to long-overdue fairness.

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Legislators have slammed the Department of Sports, Parks, and Recreation for having the lowest salaries within the central government. An analysis of average salaries conducted by the Legislature's post-audit unit revealed that the average salary in the department is just over \$33,000.

“Then the next one was like \$37,000 and \$38,000. I think that was Public Works and Agriculture,” said Senator Kurt Violet, who initiated the conversation. “By far, Sports, Parks is the lowest paid entity.”

“The highest salary I'm seeing here for groundskeeper is \$28,138,” he stated, a figure confirmed by DSPR. Violet used this as an opportunity to hit back at Governor Albert Bryan Jr., who on Tuesday, indicated his [intention to take legal action](#) against the Legislature’s override of his veto of the bill raising the salary floor for government workers. “Individuals working for this government for 10 to 20 years and making \$28,000 and there's a push back that we're financially irresponsible,” the lawmaker argued. “You have these guys driving truck up and down, cutting the field so our children to play, and we want to file a court case so that they can't make more than \$28,000 after working 20 years.”

Committee chair Senator Novelle Francis was concerned about morale within the department. Morale “could be better, to be quite honest,” said DSPR Acting Commissioner Vincent Roberts. “Pay and morale go hand in hand.” Francis, for his part, was concerned about groundskeepers and laborers who sit at the “low end of the spectrum in terms of salary.”

“I always tell them you have to speak to the union...They need to be a little more representative when it comes to the discussions with their unions,” replied Mr. Roberts. “They just figured as a commissioner I could fix everything. I tried to steer them in the right direction as far as who they need to be speaking to, becoming a shop steward.”

Sen. Francis, though, felt that DSPR could do more. “Union is only half of the battle. You, too, have to be able to step up and indicate that these salaries are inadequate for you to be able to find competent individuals,” he advised the acting commissioner. “Someone has been there for 10, 20 years and continues to make \$28,000, is really unfair. It's very difficult.”

“I can't see how the morale would be good because every payday once they receive that check, there's a level of frustration,” Francis noted. “We can only go as far as our employees carry us and when they're not happy or they're disgruntled...we're gonna take the blows,” responded Mr. Roberts.

With [legal action pending](#) over the Legislature’s decision to increase the central government’s minimum wage to \$35,000, it is uncertain whether the raises will take effect at the start of the upcoming fiscal year, as intended.