

Government Oversight Committee
Opening Statement

Good morning Committee members. My name is Greg Wright. I started State employment in 1983, CPA, in the State Auditor's Office where I was employed for approximately 12 years. I was the Iowa Veterans Home Business Manager PSE4 from December 1998 until July 2012. I was responsible for all financial operations for a State agency that's annual budget exceeded eighty million dollars. In addition to numerous administrative responsibilities I was the facilities principle contact for all state and federally funded construction projects. During my tenure at the Iowa Veterans Home while Business Manager working for seven different Commandants I always received very favorable evaluations. I'm not certain what you may ask of me today but I am prepared to the best of my ability to answer your questions. Before we begin, I would like to take the opportunity to make several statements if I may.

As a past member of the Iowa Veterans Home senior management team I'd like to say publically that both career active and retired state employees tried repeatedly to get the Governor's Office attention regarding concerns such as what I believe will be discussed today. At every turn it seemed that the Governor's Office did not want to hear about anything going awry at the Iowa Veterans Home.

It has been very disheartening to hear repeatedly from the Branstad Administration in the public domain that no credible person had stepped forward. That is not an accurate statement. Career state employees(active & inactive) have tried under threat of dismissal, reclassification, pay reduction, and professional isolation to communicate up the chain of command. When I initially tried I spoke with a DAS representative in employee services and was told I needed to call a 1-800 number and leave a message. In addition, the DAS employee told me that the Commandant would probably be told. I asked repeatedly what protection would I have. I was told there was none. How would you feel as a 29 year career state employee that you might probably be putting your IPER's retirement at risk coming forward?

If there is no other thing that comes from this matter I would hope that a safe venue be created for career state employees to come forward when they are in a similar situation. I was merit covered and thought I had protection. Sadly I found little help from DAS. At-will status gives no protection and I think dictates a disservice to state taxpayers. My old position has now been reclassified as at-will. Who would come forward in an at-will position in this type of environment to talk about questionable actions? In addition, in the current organizational structure the DAS director is ultimately responsible for both construction and personnel matters. I hope these concerns I've identified are addressed by the Iowa legislature.

I am now ready for your questions.