



# State of Tennessee

**Justin P. Wilson, State Comptroller**

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## **State Civil Service System Needs Major Reform, Comptroller Report Suggests**

Tennessee's civil service system is inefficient, unfair and outdated, a report by the Comptroller's Division of State Audit suggests.

The system, developed in 1939, centralizes the process for people who wish to apply for civil service jobs within the state's Department of Human Resources. The department maintains lists, or registers, of potential candidates for job openings.

This system is fundamentally flawed. For example, the human resources department ranks the potential candidates and recommends them to whichever state departments or agencies have job openings. This is inefficient because in many cases the top-ranked candidates are not interested in or may not actually be qualified for the open positions. The ranking process itself lacks transparency, so neither other departments and agencies nor candidates know exactly how the process is conducted.

Also, the registers are often top heavy with current state employees to the exclusion of people who wish to enter state service. And job openings are not always posted if human resources officials believe they have suitable pools of applicants for those positions.

The system also allows employees with more seniority to "bump" less senior employees out of jobs, which can set off chain reactions that displace numerous employees.

The Comptroller's report, which was released today, recommends that the current system be replaced with a decentralized system that would give departments and agencies the ability to screen and hire applicants directly.

"The civil service system was designed to meet the needs of Tennessee coming out of the Great Depression. It met the needs of the first half of the twentieth century, but a lot has changed and our system needs to change to meet the needs of the twenty-first century," Comptroller Justin P. Wilson said. "About 34,500 employees have civil service jobs with the State of Tennessee. The system used to hire them needs to be as efficient, fair and transparent as possible."

To view the report online, go to <http://www.comptroller1.state.tn.us/repository/SA/sr04056.pdf>.

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