

**BROTHER, CAN YOU SPARE A DIME? –  
How much money do police and fire personnel really make?!**

On Sunday, April 24, 2011, in advance of the Berkshire-Hathaway shareholders' meeting, the World – Herald reported a piece entitled, "He's shadowed Buffet for 17 years, but don't call the cops." It was one of those "get to know you" features about Warren Buffet's longtime private security guard. Fine.

But, if you read a little closer, you realize that this "private security" guard spent the better part of those 17 years guarding Mr. Buffet while he was also a fulltime Omaha Police officer. The story recounts how the cop started his "business" with next to nothing, but currently employs 150 people. So, while this officer was working "fulltime" for OPD, he was also building a very large business.

The article does not indicate whether or not this officer was permitted to use his sworn authority while he worked part-time, or what the OPD policy is on second-job employment, but I have a number of questions and concerns about this practice. So, I checked some of the most reputable resources about policing activity, the International Association of Chiefs of Police and LAAW International, Inc., and Americans for Effective Law Enforcement, and found that my concerns were warranted.

Here are some of my questions:

- How does a full-time employee have the time to undertake another fulltime job? Aren't we paying him for his time?
- Was this cop, and others in the department, too busy working a second job to solve the crime we already have or provide better service to the city?
- Does a cop get to use his police powers in his second job, especially when it is security? Isn't that what a cop does?
- Does the cop/security guard give his clients special treatment?
- Are taxpayers on the hook for anything the cop does while on his second job?
- What about, worker's comp? Tort liability? Etc.
- Isn't there an inherent conflict of interest?
- Why are taxpayers paying wages, overtime, benefits, PENSION, and this cop is building a second business, working, developing contacts, clients, and being compensated for being a private cop too?
- Doesn't this cop's "second" business take away from a private provider who could provide that service?
- Why shouldn't the cop have to quit OPD if he wants to run his own business?

Maybe this whole compensation thing just doesn't sit right with me because we Omaha taxpayers are paying an additional \$13 million dollars a year in taxes JUST FOR THE POLICE PENSION (don't forget, we haven't even gotten to the fire pension yet) and this guy is out collecting on the business he built while working fulltime for OPD **AND** collecting a princely pension to boot.

And, we all know that Omaha Fire personnel and their "second job" stories are legion. Because the fire department works so few actual working days, they have days and days off each month that most of us in the private sector can only dream of. As a result, OFD personnel have

customarily had second jobs. Some people even report that OFD personnel work those second jobs while they are on their fire job.

All of this begs the question, did we as taxpayers ever agree to this arrangement? Don't we get a say in all of this? Is this arrangement, so favorable to police and fire, bargained for? If not, why can't we limit these second jobs while working for OPD and OFD? Why isn't there a limitation on how much of your pension you can receive if you work at another job in "retirement?" Even federal employees and social security recipients receive some reduction to their benefit if you are still able and do work while you are "retired."

Let's have this discussion in earnest in this city. Let's have some local leadership that will ask and lead us in the direction of fair compensation and compensation that we can afford as a community. Because if you do the math – if you start adding up the income police and fire personnel make or are allowed to make while on the clock and "off" and the money police and fire personnel are allowed to make in retirement and still receive full retirement benefits, well – that's a pretty penny. And, they are doing it all on your dime.