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## Enough with the parting gifts

By Abby Nugent for TheNerve.org

According to a contract obtained by the Post and Courier, the former head of the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, Catherine Templeton, accepted a contract with the agency just one day after she left her position in January of 2015. As director, she was paid \$13,500 a month. After signing her no-bid consulting contract, she was paid \$17,300 a month—a 28 percent increase.

Templeton's predecessor, Earl Hunter, did the same sort of consulting at a rate of \$15,000 per month for three months after he left DHEC, and current director Catherine Heigel (set to leave her position on August 4), was offered the same position, but announced yesterday to The

State that she will not accept it amid this controversy.

One might think that, after agency heads leave their positions as government employees, their days of receiving taxpayer-funded salaries are over. This has not been the case. And it raises the question, why was the consultant paid more than the agency head, even after having received a pay raise of thousands of dollars shortly before leaving her post at DHEC?

DHEC Deputy Director Barbara Derrick says no one but the former director had the current knowledge of the agency that the consulting required. Templeton says that with expenses such as taxes, the rate of pay for the consulting work ends up being the same as her agency-head salary.

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**GIFTS ON 3A**

### Gifts

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Still, is this pricey consulting really necessary to facilitate the transition from director to director? That Heigel turned down the contract suggests it isn't. According to The State, DHEC regulator David Wilson plans on handling her responsibilities until

a new director is chosen. If her consultation services were absolutely necessary, he wouldn't be able to do that.

A consultant is also less accountable than an agency head, who has clear duties, yet taxpayers foot the same bill for the job, which seems like a parting gift. Heigel says this has been the "normal way to do it." Maybe it's time for that to change.