

Explosive Scandal: Politician Mark Hartley maneuvers to collect a bigger pension cash bonus of \$567,004



James Croft plotting to increase his pension cash bonus by 60% to \$129,764 just days after the 2024 election?

County Commissioner Mark Hartley

Republican Baker County Commissioner Mark Hartley decided his original taxpayer-paid pension bonus of \$303,896 scheduled for June 30, 2027, was not enough money. On August 17, 2023, Mark Hartley submitted paperwork, renegeing on a previous contract promise to resign on June 30, 2027 in exchange for being eligible for the \$303,896 pension cash bonus. This cunning maneuver allowed Hartley to extend his pension bonus period by an additional three years, inflating his total pension cash bonus to an indefensible \$567,004 with a monthly taxpayer-funded pension soaring from approximately \$2,975 to \$5,551! Mark Hartley set a new low in exploiting his political position for personal enrichment. Source documents at <https://TripleDippers.org/hall-of-shame>

Many believe that Republican Baker County Commissioner James Croft has already decided to break his contract promise for a 5-year pension cash bonus due on November 30, 2024 to apply for an 8-year \$129,764 pension cash bonus days after the November 5, 2024 election.

As a Southern Baptist Evangelist James Croft promised during his election campaign to be "fighting big government. He favors reviewing the county budget line by line to seek out waste¹". "James Croft became a hypocrite when he decided that a standard paycheck and pension was not enough for him", said Dave Jaye, Researcher, <https://tripleDippers.org/>. "Now as a Politician, County Commissioner James Croft decided collecting a paycheck and a pension at the same time to do the same job and not paying 3% of his salary into the Florida Pension system like all other Florida Public employees is not government waste if the taxpayer money is in his pocket".

How much of their taxpayer paid pension will Politicians Mark Hartley and James Croft promise, in writing, to give to charity? Will James Croft sign the Promise to the Taxpayers Pledge (attached) to be satisfied with a 5-year pension cash bonus and not take an 8-year pension cash bonus?

Hartley and Croft are Triple Dipping Politicians collecting a paycheck and a pension at the same time to do the same job and not paying 3% of their salary into the Florida pension system like all other public workers shifting personal responsibility to taxpayers. No one in the private sector collects a paycheck and a pension at the same time to do the same job. The Pension cash bonus system that Politicians Mark Hartley and James Croft used their political positions to sign up for has led to a \$39 Billion unfunded Florida Pension and health care liability, a \$1,725 liability for every man, woman and child in Florida², noted Dave Jaye.

¹ <https://www.jacksonville.com/story/news/2012/08/11/croft-looks-unseat-baker-commissioner-crews/15857965007/>

² <https://thecapitolist.com/frs-double-dip-retirement-expansion-will-make-it-harder-for-private-sector-to-compete-with-state/>

Dave Jaye, a researcher at www.tripledippers.org, remarks, "Sneaky Politician Mark Harley and James Croft are greedy. How many gourmet meals, luxury cars, and vacation homes does one person truly need or can use?"

The average Baker County working men and women make \$40,776 a year³ and would have to work 13.9 years to make Mark Hartley's Pension cash bonus of \$567,004. Mark Hartley and James Croft's greedy cash grab can be stopped if they are defeated in their re-election bid on August 20, 2024.

As a former Baker County School teacher, Mark Hartley knows that fewer than 45% of Baker County High School students are Job ready as only 46% pass reading, only 43% pass math and only 10.1% are college ready, yet 86% graduate with what is often viewed as a worthless Diploma.

<https://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/florida/districts/baker-school-district/baker-county-senior-high-school-4674> Mark Hartley's \$567,004 and James Croft's \$129,764 pension cash bonuses totaling \$696,768 would be better spent on providing 49,769 tutoring hours⁴ for Baker County students.

Hartley and Croft's pension cash bonus is formally called the "Deferred Retirement Option Program" (DROP). DROP's original intent: helping the state retain essential and rare skill sets and experience in mission-critical jobs-- not for politicians and low-skill jobs. The names, employers, and pension cash bonuses of approximately 28,536 Florida's Triple Dippers are at <https://tripledippers.org/fl-statewide-2023-june-28537-tripledippers/>.

Only Florida Politicians can apply for special permission to collect a pension cash bonus and break their contract promise to retire as a condition to collect a pension cash bonus still not pay 3% of their salary into the Florida Retirement System. <https://www.flrules.org/gateway/readRefFile.asp?filename=DP-TEOC-2.pdf&refId=395>

Governor Ron DeSantis signed SB 7024 effective July 1, 2023, allowing politicians and bureaucrats to extend pension bonuses by 60% from 5 to 8 years and up to 10 years for School Employees and increasing the pension bonus interest rate from 1.2% to 4% and allowing many to collect pension bonuses earlier⁵. The Triple Dipper Pension Bonus system created \$39 billion in unfunded Florida Retirement obligations, amounting to a \$1,725 liability for every man, woman, and child in Florida.

Check out our latest Investigative Report at the Hall of Shame <https://TripleDippers.org/hall-of-shame> where we profile the most Greedy Florida Politicians and Bureaucrats using their public positions for personal enrichment.

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³ <https://www.daytonastate.edu/faculty-and-staff/institutional-research/files/volusia-flagler/annual-average-wages-by-county.pdf>

⁴ [https://www.ziprecruiter.com/Salaries/Tutor-Com-Salary--in-Florida#:~:text=As%20of%20Mar%2013%2C%202024,\(75th%20percentile\)%20in%20Florida.](https://www.ziprecruiter.com/Salaries/Tutor-Com-Salary--in-Florida#:~:text=As%20of%20Mar%2013%2C%202024,(75th%20percentile)%20in%20Florida.) \$696,768 /\$14 = 49,769 tutor hours.

⁵ <https://thecapitolist.com/frs-double-dip-retirement-expansion-will-make-it-harder-for-private-sector-to-compete-with-state/>