



Where the top of the 1 percent lives (hint: not mostly NYC)

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“Based on Where the Top 1 Percent Lives, the Occupy Crowd Should Be Protesting Against Big Government.”

So **says** Cato’s Dan Mitchell, who takes an **MSN Money report** on the 15 U.S. counties (the highest one-half of 1 percent) with the highest per capita income and creates this map:



Map of wealthy counties near D.C. (source: International Liberty blog by Dan Mitchell)

The stars, as you may have guessed, represent counties in the top 15. You’ll notice there are 10 such stars — meaning two-thirds of America’s very richest counties are suburbs of the nation’s capital. That includes the three highest-earning counties and four of the top five. By comparison, suburbs of New York City account for only four of the top 15. (The 15th is just south of Denver.)

Here's a sampling of what the MSN report had to say about some of these counties:

15. Charles County, Md.: "The first of five Maryland counties to make our list, Charles' population grew 21.6 percent in the first decade of the 21st century." (From Kyle: Hmm...21.6 percent growth during a decade when federal spending almost doubled.)

No. 14 St. Mary's County, Md.: "The median household income in St. Mary's skyrocketed from about \$72,000 in 2009 to more than \$88,000 in 2010, the biggest percentage increase (roughly 22 percent) on our richest-counties list." (From Kyle: Federal spending increased by 16 percent between fiscal 2008, which included the beginning of calendar 2009, and fiscal 2010, which included the end of calendar 2010.)

No.2 Fairfax County, Va.: "Langley (headquarters of the CIA) is within the county, so government employees must be making a decent amount of money these days. Also, the unemployment rate in the county has been astoundingly low historically, hitting 1.4% in 1999, when the national rate was 4.3%." (From Kyle: Nuff said.)

While there has been a spate of reports about the relatively higher pay among federal employees compared to their private-sector peers, that factor alone cannot account for this concentration of wealth. Clearly, the rent-seeking business is booming like never before.

Both factors owe directly to the growth in federal government. Which gets back to Mitchell's original point.

– By Kyle Wingfield