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Federal Employment Is Not a Full Time Job

by Trey Kovacs

An excellent editorial by the *Investor's Business Daily* staff questioned whether “government work is a full time job?”

The article cites *Washington Times* analysis of government data showing that federal offices have been closed 21 days since the October 31 government shutdown. In that time period, federal employees have only worked 75 percent of the time.

IBD makes the astute point of how little the impact of federal employees not working has had on the public at large. And because of this, suggests, “how about lowering their pay to match the actual hours worked?”

This reform would fix more than just paying federal employees when federal offices are closed. As Senator Tom Coburn, R-Okla., noted during sequester cut negotiations, the federal government loses vast amounts of work hours year after year even when there is not a government shutdown or snow days:

- **AWOL Employees:** Between 2001 and 2007, employees at 18 departments and agencies were AWOL for at least 19.6 million hours, equivalent to 9,410 years of lost work.
- **Employees Being Paid to Perform Non-Official Duties:** In 2011, the government spent over \$155 million on 3.4 million hours of official time for employees that show up for work but were being paid to perform duties not related to the mission of their agency or the government. According to the Office of Personnel Management, this is equivalent to a full year's worth of work for 1,632 employees.
- **Employees Paid to “Stand By”:** At least 919 employees received standby pay in 2010, and 906 received it in 2011. The total cost of paying for these employees not to work over this two year period was over \$13.1 million.
- **Government Contractors Paid to Do Nothing:** Delays in the security clearance process have kept between 10 and 20 percent of all intelligence contractors sitting idle awaiting a clearance while still being paid large salaries. The cost of wasted contractor man-hours to the government has been estimated to be roughly between \$900 million and \$1.8 billion a month. Supporting document [here](#).

In addition to paying federal employees to not work, IBD cites a Cato Institute study that found the “average total yearly compensation for federal workers in 2012 was \$114,976, 74% higher than the private sector's \$65,917.”

In the end, whether or not federal government employment is a full time job matters little. What does matter is implementing reform, which stops paying federal employees for nothing and results in “fewer bureaucrats means fewer regulations. Congress out for more time means fewer laws.”