

The News-Gazette

Reasons for higher federal pay scale

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A recent letter to the editor cited a Cato Institute study that determined federal employees are paid 75 percent more than private-sector employees.

That is only true when you add the word "average." The average federal employee is indeed paid 75 percent more than the average private-sector employee.

The problem with this statistic is that, in recent years, the average federal employee has education and skill set qualifications much greater than the average "real" world worker.

That has not always been the case.

I spent over 26 years at the U.S. Army Construction Engineering Research Laboratory here in Champaign. When I first started working there in 1983, the research staff was significantly outnumbered by the support staff. Over the course of my career, that ratio shifted dramatically.

This happened through the efforts of conservative and libertarian organizations, like the Cato Institute (founded by the Koch brothers, by the way), whose mantra was, and still is, "privatize, privatize, privatize."

Most, if not all, of the lower-level support positions are now contracted out.

This is even more true at our Department of Defense installations. The majority of federal employees are serving in upper-level professional administrative jobs, while the work-a-day activities are being performed by private-sector contractors.

I suspect if you did an honest comparison of the average professional federal employee to his/her average professional private-sector employee counterpart, the federal employee would still be paid less.

And, the security aspect of a federal job is definitely not what it was when I was a young engineer.