



Lawmakers task GAO to review federal pay system

Two leading House Republicans last week asked the Government Accountability Office to help lay the groundwork for replacing the General Schedule with a performance-based system.

House Oversight and Government Reform Committee Chairman Darrell Issa, R-Calif., and Rep. Dennis Ross, R-Fla., the chairman of the federal workforce subcommittee said in an April 1 letter to GAO that the GS system must be replaced "with a merit-based, market sensitive system that recognizes and rewards individual employee performance."

The federal government's own studies, based on data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, show federal employees are paid on average 24 percent less than their private-sector counterparts. But recent studies from conservative and libertarian groups such as the Heritage Foundation and Cato Institute conclude that federal employees are vastly overcompensated.

Issa and Ross asked GAO to review the different pay studies and identify why they have come to different conclusions.

They also want GAO to examine the methodology behind the GS system's annual pay adjustments, and study how much the GS system recognizes individual employee performance.

Issa and Ross are vocal critics of the government's step increase system, which awards pay raises to most GS employees every one to three years.

A recent Federal Times investigation found that only a few hundred GS employees are denied step increases for poor performance each year.