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House approves 2-year pay-scale freeze

By STEPHEN LOSEY | Last Updated: December 9, 2010

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The House Wednesday night approved a two-year pay-scale freeze for federal employees as part of a continuing resolution that mostly funds agencies at 2010 spending levels for the rest of the fiscal year.

The bill, HR 3082, now goes to the Senate. It's unclear whether the Senate will pass that bill or a substitute, but the pay freeze is expected to be included in whatever bill becomes law.

The pay freeze would halt adjustments to the General Schedule, Senior Executive Service, wage grade and other pay scales in the executive branch for 2011 and 2012. But employees will still receive their step increases in those years, as well as promotions and bonuses. About 1.1 million GS employees will receive \$2.5 billion in raises through step increases over the next two years, according to Federal Times' analysis.

Federal employee groups continue to object to the proposed freeze.

The Federal Managers Association said it is disappointed by the House's vote, and cited government data that found federal employees are paid 24 percent less than their private-sector counterparts. Other organizations, such as the Cato Institute, dispute those estimates, and say federal employees are paid far more than private-sector workers.

"By imposing a two-year freeze on federal employees, it is clear members of Congress are bowing to political pressure stemming from the spread of misinformation relating to both the composition of the federal work force and the impact instituting a freeze will have on deficit reduction efforts," FMA National President Patricia Niehaus said. "Similar to their private-sector counterparts, federal workers are confronting rising health care costs, and many are responsible for supporting their families on a single paycheck. Applying a multiyear blanket freeze on federal pay effectively constitutes a reduction in take-home pay, which exacerbates the financial strain already shouldered by these public servants."

The Professional Managers Association said the freeze would affect employees differently depending on their pay system. Many of its members — IRS managers in a pay band system — would not receive any pay raises because they do not receive step increases like GS employees do.

"The mechanics of the freeze are not equitable across the various pay systems," PMA said.

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dgrvy1 wrote:

The "pay freeze" does not include step increases, promotions and bonuses, okay, fine I understand that. That's just wonderful for those that qualify. However, how many civil servants are ready or very close to retirement, are maxed out at grade/step increases (therefore the only pay increase would be the COLA), receiving an increase in health insurance premium because they do not want to change carriers to save on premiums at the risk of care available/received, not eligible for promotions for one reason or another, and their staff's budget doesn't allow for much of a "bonus" especially after taxes? This pay freeze was well thought out...the surge of civil servants getting ready to retire...hold down their high-three annual salary, newly hired civilians at lower annual salaries, increase health care premiums, sky rocketing prices on EVERYTHING in life, let the older, well-seasoned, corporate knowledge retire, and do not give retirees COLAs either. What I worked nearly 40yrs for!

12/10/2010 5:39:30 AM

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The House Wednesday night approved a two-year pay-scale freeze for federal employees as part of a continuing resolution that mostly funds agencies at 2010 spending levels for the rest of the fiscal year. (Karen Bleier / Agence France-Presse)

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