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## LETTER: The high-pay myth

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January 07, 2011 9:01 AM

A recent Daily News editorial ("Cut, don't just freeze, feds' pay," Dec. 11) claimed that federal civil service wages and salaries exceed what comparable jobs pay in the private sector. This often-quoted accusation from conservatives dates back at least to the Reagan years. Just as Ronald Reagan failed to find "welfare queens," he also failed to substantiate his claims of exorbitant civil service pay, even as he advocated raising salaries for political appointees who made more in the private sector.

Government analyses estimate that federal workers average 24 percent less in pay than comparable private-sector workers in similar jobs. The difference is particularly pronounced for those in the scientific and engineering disciplines who hold advanced degrees.

Your editorial suggested that federal pay be reduced by 5 percent as a gesture of good faith by President Obama to reduce budget deficits. I propose that those who supported tax reductions largely favoring the wealthy (supply-side economics) during the Reagan, Bush I and Bush II administrations make a similar gesture by donating 5 percent of their gross income to the Department of the Treasury to help reduce the \$10 trillion in debt accumulated during the Reagan and Bush tenures.

This would include, of course, Freedom Communications Inc. owners and their newspaper editorial boards, as well as the patrons and fellows of the Cato Institute.

Conservatives also complain about the size of the federal work force. There are about 2.7 million executive branch employees now, compared with an average of 2.9 million during the Reagan years, in a nation that has grown by more than 60 million people.

— DWIGHT POLK

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