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## THE DAILY DEBRIEF



Monday-Friday, 3-7pm  
with Chris Dorobek and Amy Morris.

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### OPM Director Berry furious over federal pay editorial

March 12, 2010 - 5:45pm

John Berry, director, Office of Personnel Management

Click to hear the interview

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By [Dorothy Ramienski](#)  
Internet Editor  
Federal News Radio

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Throughout the week, Federal News Radio has been covering the debate over federal employee pay.

From an [analysis in USA Today on Monday](#), to a [rebuttal from the Bureau of Labor Statistics yesterday](#), there is a lot of anger on both sides of the issue.

This morning, *The Washington Times* printed an editorial, [The Federal Bonus Bonanza](#).

John Berry, director of the Office of Personnel Management, said there are glaring errors in the piece.

"The first line in the editorial says that the federal government is growing during this [economic] downturn and it's a cause for alarm. . . . That's what the editorial says, here are the facts. There will be 2.1 million full time federal employees in this year. That is less than there were in the federal government when Lyndon Johnson was president in 1967. If you compare the growth in the size of our country, there are over 100 million more Americans today that those workers are serving."

Berry said the government currently has fewer workers handling more work compared to 40 years ago.

He also said it is important to remember that more than half of federal employees work for the Defense Department, the Homeland Security Department or the Department of Veterans Affairs.

"I would ask The Washington Times which of those they would like to cut. Do they want to compromise our national security, our care for our veterans or the protection of our people against terrorism? I don't."

Berry said he is extremely upset about a part of the article that implied that federal employees do little other than sit at their desks all day.

"When I heard that and I read that -- it just steams me. Do they think that the researchers at NIH who are developing cures for cancer today are bureaucrats sitting at their desks? Do they think the TSA employees who are screening people who are sitting next to you on the airplane today -- are they just sitting at their desks? Are the Customs and Border Patrol officers that are screening tractor trailers coming over our borders that might carry a nuclear device -- are they just sitting at their desks? This is the kind of stuff that is just a denegation of public service and there should be no place for it in our country."

He added that there are federal civilian workers who are putting their lives on the line every day, in addition to members of the military, "Over 2,000 civil servants -- not in the military -- these are civil servants -- have given their lives just since 1996 alone. That's the ultimate sacrifice."

The editorial also brings up federal salaries. As Federal News Radio told you on The Daily Debrief, [a recent article in USA Today](#) compared salaries of federal employees to their counterparts in the private sector and found that, on average, feds make more.

Berry said he doesn't think the salary comparison was fair and that The Washington Times referenced a report from the CATO Institute, which he thinks has an anti-government slant.

"All of the facts are comparing the wrong things. I thought Director Orszag's statements this week were directly on point. [Orszag] is a professional economist. He's a heck of a lot smarter than I am. He said very clearly, when education and age are held constant, the entire difference in the average pay between the federal and private sector absolutely disappears."

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[OPM Director Berry furious over federal pay editorial](#)

He said that he thinks that some of the anger against the federal government and federal employees stems from the fact that many are facing difficult times across the country right now.

He added that he wants to set the record straight -- federal employees are hard workers and very generous people.

"Over \$6 billion has been raised through the Combined Federal Campaign. It's an incredible example. It's the largest workplace charitable giving effort in the world. It shows you that federal employees are big-hearted people. They are working hard. They're working hard to serve our country, to serve our nation and to serve their neighbors."

Tags: [Pay & Benefits](#), [OPM](#), [John Berry](#), [Washington Times](#), [USA Today](#), [Dorothy Ramienski](#)

Today's News



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