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Federal employees used as scapegoats

Politicians are using figures from the libertarian Cato Institute to justify an attack on federal employees and retirees. But the numbers that purport to show that “the average federal civilian worker now earns twice as much in wages and benefits as the average worker in the U.S. private sector” are skewed and don’t tell the real story.

The study surveys both salary and retirement benefits for federal employees, but only salary for private-sector jobs.

The data gloss over the important differences in occupation, skill level, age and education that determine salaries in both the public and private sectors. For example, the federal government has more jobs that require greater qualifications than the private sector generally, so federal civilian workers are more educated, with 44 percent holding bachelor’s degrees, versus just 19 percent in the private sector. Federal employees are also older — with an average age of 45, compared to 40 in the private sector — and have more on-the-job experience.

The latest report from the nonpartisan federal pay agent — which accounts for differences in occupation, education, experience, length of service, age and geographic location — shows that salaries for federal civilian employees are actually 22 percent less than for comparable private-sector workers.

So why is federal compensation on the top of the budget cutters’ list? Because it is easy. But it is not fair. We need broadly shared sacrifice to address America’s very serious budget crisis. Well-performed functions of government are just as important to our country as efficient private-sector entities. And the people who perform those government functions should be protected and encouraged, not castigated.

Arthur Burnside

Aiken

Holder insulted U.S. military

While speaking before a group of attorneys recently, U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder stated that lawyers and the courts “are our primary defense against terrorists.”

This shows his complete disconnect from reality and is totally indefensible. Our American soldiers have proven they are our primary defense against terrorism. They have shed their blood and lives to defend us. President Obama made a horrible mistake in appointing this man into this position, and then the U.S. Senate made a huge mistake in confirming him.

I urge the president to immediately demand that the attorney general apologize for this stupid, insensitive comment. I appreciate the enormous sacrifices our American soldiers have made.

Mike Hicks

Irmo

Vitriol began with attacks on Bush

In his letter (“Political rancor endangers union”, June 17) Edward H. Beardsley accuses letter writer Motte Yarborough of “creating a masterpiece of fictional invective” against President Obama. I did not read the letter by Mr. Yarborough, but I know that Mr. Beardsley has created a masterpiece of fictional invective of his own. He lives in fantasy land if he thinks the political rancor started with Obama. It started in 2000; the vitriolic attacks from the left and the Democrats against George Bush were much worse than anything we have seen in the past two years.

I think that both parties need to elect people who believe in moderation, genuine discourse and compromises for the good of this country. Mr. Beardsley’s accusations are a case of the pot calling the kettle black, because he probably considered the attacks on Bush from the left as properly advancing his “more perfect union.”

Eruch Tata

Lexington

President Obama out to ruin U.S.

While reading Edward H. Beardsley’s June 17 letter (“Political rancor endangers union”), I kept recalling the old saying that there are none so blind as those who will not see.

Barack Hussein Obama is the classic and mature European-style socialist politician, and he has every intention of taking the United States to that political model despite the fact that a vast majority of the populace does not want that to happen. He plans to do this with or without legislative or judicial approval, and he has proved that with his actions.

American citizens are not his subjects, and he is not our sovereign. He rules like he is a benevolent dictator, and I for one will be working hard toward November 2012 to vote him out of office. If, heaven forbid, he is elected to another term, our great country is sunk.

Robert Owens

Lexington

U.S. needlessly mired in war

I never imagined that thousands of U.S. forces would still be in Iraq in 2011. I never thought President Obama would increase troop levels in Afghanistan and never believed that he would violate the War Powers Act, but he has done all three. What we have become is a nation permanently at war, most recently in Libya, where the result of that fiasco will be a government managed by the Muslim Brotherhood.

My real but foolish hope has been that Sens. Lindsey Graham and Jim DeMint would oppose an American warring state. But they seem to believe that keeping floods of heroin out of Europe and preventing Sunnis and Shiites in the Middle East from killing one another is our business. It will probably stop when the United States just can't pay for it anymore or U.S. citizens select a federal government less interested in foreign peace-keeping and more committed to the well-being of its own people.

John Huffman

West Columbia

It's time to bring the troops home

I watched the president's address to the nation about the planned draw-down of troops from Iraq and Afghanistan. I understand that 10,000 troops are to be home by the end of this year, and more than 30,000 total will be home by next summer.

I truly believe that fighting World War I and World War II was necessary to our nation's security. I truly do not believe that fighting in Korea, or Vietnam, or Kuwait was necessary to the security of our nation. If my understanding of history is correct, Korea and Vietnam were fought to prevent the spread of communism. The war in Kuwait was fought to drive Saddam Hussein out of a country that he wrongly invaded. Considering that these three countries are so, so far from the United States, I do not see how these wars were even conceivably or remotely fought to protect our nation's security.

Now, the over-paid, under-worked and clueless government officials in Washington are continuing to force tens of thousands of American troops into harm's way for absolutely no good reason.

It is well past time for our so-called government officials to stop being war-mongers and bring all of our troops home to safety and their families, where they all belong.

Timothy Monroe Bledsoe

North Augusta

Future electric, not natural gas

Natural gas may never make it as an automobile fuel. It is not as clean and green as many believe it is. In fact, there are studies that show it is dirtier than coal in producing greenhouse gases. And although the price is low at present, it was three times more expensive in the recent past — and it may be again.

As it replaces coal to generate electricity, and as the demand increases, the price per unit is bound to increase. It is now cheap because of the new method of horizontal drilling in shale deposits and fracturing the shale with explosives. But that method may be polluting ground water and causing other undesirable effects; the full story is not yet known.

In addition, it will cost billions to outfit the country with fueling stations and to produce cars with gas tanks to accommodate natural gas. More than likely, the future will be electric cars.

Everette Tompkins
Lexington