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## Gillis: Government jobs in good supply to taxpayers' regret

Here's a great help-wanted advertisement: "Employment opportunities are available providing incomes of more than \$100,000 annually. Employees receive excellent lifetime health insurance benefits, college tuition assistance and ample vacation time. Early retirement is available with pensions far exceeding those of Social Security. Job security is provided with no layoffs, even during difficult economic times."

"Wow," you might say. "Where do I apply?" Just contact the United States government.

In a report published by Free Enterprise Nation of Irvine, Calif., for the year 2008, the average federal civilian employee earned \$119,982 when wages and benefits were combined. That's 100% more than the \$59,909 earned by private sector workers for the same period. It demonstrates a 34% disparity increase in public versus private sector incomes in a decade.

One of the most eye-opening facts available to anyone who cares to search for them is a substantial majority of public sector employees enjoy guaranteed taxpayer-funded pension plans that permit retirement in 10 to 25 years. It includes excellent health benefits and pay that is not dependent on Social Security, far exceeding that provided to those in the private sector.

According to a January Cato Institute article in the Washington Times, Social Security is not sustainable.

The FEN report went on to discuss the prevalence of practices that increase public sector benefits through salary abuses during the employees' final work year. Since retirement incomes and benefits are often computed based on the last year of employment, preferential overtime allocations, final year promotions, and cash in lieu of unused sick and vacation days is rampant in the government employee sector.

The federal government isn't the only employer with disparity between the public and private sectors.

The FEN report also found more than half the police and firefighters retiring in the city of San Francisco received retirement pensions greater than the wages they received during their working years. A Long Island Railroad worker in New York enhanced his annual salary of \$71,000 with \$165,000 in overtime and \$41,000 in sick and vacation time cash-outs, which provided a retirement income exceeding \$121,000 annually. The county that surrounds Las Vegas spends \$1.2 billion of its \$1.5 billion general fund budget on public employees' wages and benefits.

Public-private sector employee stories continue, but the average reader may not want to see them. Many in the private sector simply hope to find employment before they no longer are eligible for unemployment compensation.

Many unions are struggling to assist members in their job search often sending them out-of-state or even to another country. Numerous small businesses must decide whether to eliminate employees' benefits or close down. Yes, the stories go on, but we really don't want to hear them.

Today, there are an estimated 5 million businesses in the private sector of the United States, according to the FEN. They represent about 115 million people, many of whom are concerned about their wages and benefits now and into the future. At the same time, we are experiencing outrageous irresponsible government spending and unsustainable debt levels.

Small businesses are the major employers of non-public workers, but they are dying. With decreased revenues coupled with increasing taxes and employee benefit costs, they can't hang on. We've lost considerably more than 8 million private sector jobs during the past two years while about 100,000 jobs have been added in the public sector.

Is there any question where many of our tax dollars are and will continue to be spent? If you really want a return on the taxes you pay, seek a government job.

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