



Washington's Wealthiest Bureaucrats Will Get Even Richer in 2018

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Hundreds of thousands of government workers living in the Washington, D.C. region — already some of the highest-paid employees in the country — will be among the big winners in 2018 when Federal Locality Pay raises take effect.

“Employees in the Washington, D.C., locality pay area will receive the highest locality pay increase in 2018, with a raise of 2.29 percent,” according to FedSmith.com. “Coming in first may make some federal employees in the Washington area happy. In 2017, Washington area employees were second among the top 10 locality pay-raise areas. On the other hand, in 2017, their raise was a little higher at 2.32 percent.”

The Locality Pay program is intended to supplement the regular paychecks of career federal civil servants with additional dollars, depending upon the cost of living in their work locations. There are 2.1 million federal workers, not counting members of the U.S. military, and their compensation cost taxpayers more than \$276 billion in 2016.

Federal pay is already so lucrative, compared to the compensation received by most private sector workers, that four of the nation's five richest counties — and five of the top 10 — are located in the Washington, D.C., region and have huge populations of civil servants.

The richest county in the country is Loudoun County, Virginia, with a median annual household income of \$125,900, followed by Falls Church, an independent Virginia city with county status, at \$122,092, according to data compiled by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Fairfax County, Virginia, has the third highest median household income, at \$112,844, followed by Howard County, Maryland, with \$110,224. The first non-Washington, D.C., county among the 10 richest U.S. counties is Douglas County, Colorado, at \$109,926.

The remaining top-10 counties include Los Alamos County, New Mexico, at \$107,126; Williamson County, Tennessee, at \$104,367; Arlington County, Virginia, at \$104,354; Hunterdon County, New Jersey; at \$102,797; and Santa Clara County, California, at \$102,191.

Traditionally, federal workers received significantly lower salaries on average than private sector employees, but the government provided more lucrative retirement and other benefits. Beginning in 1962, however, when Democratic President John F. Kennedy signed an executive order allowing labor unions to organize federal bureaucrats, federal salaries steadily grew while the benefits became even more generous.

The result was that by 1990, according to the *Cato Institute*, federal pay and benefits were on average 39 percent higher than those in the private sector. That trend has accelerated in more recent years as federal employee unions contributed hundreds of millions of dollars to congressional Democrats and presidents, who in turn supported higher civil service pay and benefits.

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Cato's most recent calculations show that total compensation for federal career workers is, on average 80, percent more lucrative than that received by private sector employees.

Groups representing federal workers bitterly dispute such comparison. The Federal Pay Council, for example, contends that civil servants are paid 35 percent less on average than private sector workers.

“This organization does not take into account benefits, only salaries, and their method of calculating these results is obscure and *shows different results from most other studies*, according to FedSmith.com.