



## Recognize public service workers

By: Virginia L. Giordano – May 11, 2013

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Dear Editor:

Across the country and in communities like Carlisle, government employees protect and serve our nation. To honor these workers and their service, the week of May 5-11 has been designated as Public Service Recognition Week.

Personally, I want to express my support for the 199,978 active and retired federal workers in Pennsylvania. Won't you join me?

If you checked the weather forecast before going outside this morning, thank the federal employees at the National Weather Service who alert us to impending storms. If your child played with a toy today, thank the federal employees at the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission who administer our toy safety standards. If you travel to a National Park this summer, thank the park rangers who help families create lifetime memories.

No travel plans? Here's something you can do from your own front door. If you received your mail today, thank the Postal Service carrier who delivered it.

Many of the services on which Pennsylvania relies are made possible by America's federal workforce. A recent annual report of the Federal Salary Council, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics data, found that federal employees are paid 34.6 percent less than their private-sector counterparts; the results show a widening pay gap.

A report from the Congressional Budget Office found America's most educated and experienced federal workers earn about 18 percent less than they would if they worked in the private sector.

The National Active and Retired Federal Employees association does not dispute these findings, but it is worth noting that it makes sense that the starting salary of an administrative assistant at the CIA, who must undergo a rigorous background check, is slightly higher than that of an administrative assistant at a top law firm.

Politicians have falsely claimed that federal employees are paid more than their private-sector counterparts, based on a study from the Cato Institute (a libertarian think tank that advocates limited government) that alleges "the average federal civilian worker now earns twice as much in wages and benefits as the average worker in the U.S. private sector." These numbers are skewed, outdated and don't tell the full story.

Other federal employees on which we depend for services are in veterans affairs, homeland security, agriculture, health and human services, transportation, housing and urban development, and education.

We probably don't realize all that our federal worker neighbors do for us, but I hope they know that we appreciate their service to our country.

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