

Michele Bachmann. Photo: Patrick Caldwell, The American Independent

Bachmann pleased with Obama pay-freeze plan

By **Andy Birkey** | 12.01.10 | 5:34 pm | [More from The Minnesota Independent](#)

Rep. Michele Bachmann told Fox News on Tuesday that she's happy President Obama is pushing to freeze pay for federal employees, and she cited a similar bill she introduced last March. Bachmann said that federal employees pull in salaries that are twice what private-sector workers make. The same meme, which experts say is difficult to prove, is being pushed by conservative think tanks the Cato Institute and Heritage Foundation.

"I had offered this bill that we would freeze not only members of Congress salary but also the salary of all of the federal employees because the salary of federal employees, the wage and benefit packages, are double that of the private sector," she said. "This is unconscionable."

She added, "I'm happy now the president wants to revive that bill that I introduced, and I think we should get that passed immediately."

While Cato and Heritage sources say that federal workers make twice as much as private sector employees, government studies show that federal workers actually make 22 percent less on average than private sector workers.

But the truth about how much the average federal worker makes isn't easy to determine, as Howard Risher, an economist who worked on federal pay policies in the 1990s, [wrote about the controversy](#):

Which side is correct? The fact is we truly don't know. Both sides rely on analytical methods that even the most astute economists would have trouble understanding. And neither has detailed job-to-job comparisons to support their arguments. The competing analyses are totally different than those used by employers in other sectors. The simple truth is that the federal government is spending roughly \$100 billion on the salaries of its white-collar workforce, and we don't know whether the funds are wisely spent.

Risher says that [sufficient data is lacking](#):

The fact is, the data relevant to this comparison have not been assembled for almost 20 years. So the public can be reacting only to the vague generalizations that have dominated this debate now for months. Both sides have claimed they have completed analyses confirming their argument, but actual data for actual workers "doing similar work" have not been produced. Generalizations do not lead to sound policies. And if there are to be federal budget cuts — and it certainly is not my intention to oppose closing the budget deficit — the slices should be made with a scalpel, not an ax.

Here are Bachmann's statements:

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