

# Federal Computer WEEK

Strategy and business management for government leaders

## FCW Insider

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### Be honest now: Is the federal workforce over-staffed?

Guest entry by Federal Computer Week editor John Monroe.

When Rep. Kevin Brady (R-Texas) introduced a bill in January that would cut the federal workforce by 10 percent, we received numerous comments from already-over-burdened readers who feared they would be handed even more work. But some of our readers offered alternative perspectives.

The basic issue, as they see it, is that the staffing at many agencies is out of synch with the work actually being done. They agreed with Chris Edwards, editor of the CATO Institute's website [downsizinggovernment.org](http://downsizinggovernment.org), who described such cuts as "the low-hanging fruit" at a time when budget cuts are needed.

Some readers had particular low-hanging fruit in mind.

"I say they ask each federal employee to take a look around them and identify the dead wood," wrote an anonymous reader. "There is a GS-15 step 10 in my group that plays games on his computer all day and steals \$155,500 from the taxpayers, annually."

But how do we reconcile such comments with others from readers who say they don't have enough hours in the day to get their jobs done? One possibility, suggested by several readers, is that the problem is not in the rank-and-file of the workforce, but in management.

One reader put it this way: "Picture one employee working under several managers whose positions are director, deputy director, assistant deputy director, manager, assistant manager, supervisor, assistant supervisor, and so on down the chain of command. These management positions earn up to \$200,000 and up."

"When a private sector company re-organizes, the first thing they do is cut the middle management," another reader added.

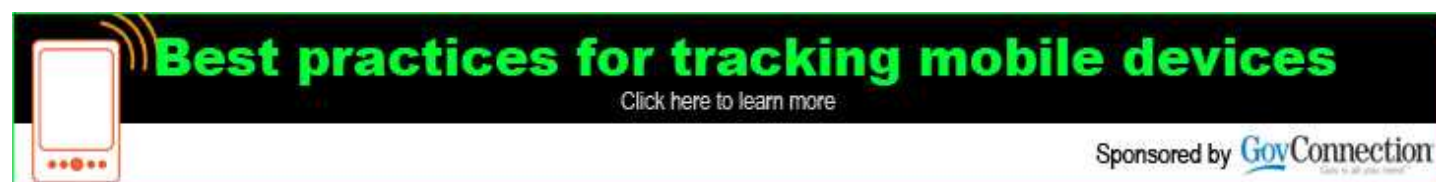
But others are not convinced.

"Haven't we been around this block a few times over the past 20 years?" a reader asked. "And each and every time, a story or event will take place that has Congress screaming at an understaffed, underfunded agency to 'fix my constituent's problems!!!' Of course, the ones screaming at us to fix said problems are usually the same folks that voted to cut our funding and staffing levels."

What do you think? Putting aside the current political bickering, does the federal workforce need to be downsized or realigned? Short of cross-the-board cuts, are there particular areas in the workforce that could use some trimming? In particular, what is the state of the IT workforce?

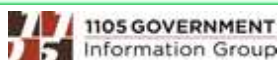
Post your comments here. This summer we will publish a selection of the most thoughtful responses in a print edition of FCW.

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