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Obama's comment about Gibbs' 'modest pay' draws fire

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President Obama is taking a little heat for a comment he made about outgoing spokesman Robert Gibbs.

No, it's not criticism of Gibbs -- it concerns his salary.

"He's had a six-year stretch now where basically he's been going 24/7 with relatively modest pay," Obama told *The New York Times*.

Gibbs makes \$172,200 a year.

Writing on [The Atlantic website](#), James Warren said Obama's 'relatively modest' comment "suggested a slight case of tone deafness."

Gibbs "earns \$172,200 in a nation where the average family income hovers around \$55,000, unemployment is high, record foreclosures persist and wages for most folks are at best stagnant," Warren wrote.

Ed O'Keefe of [The Washington Post](#) also weighed in, noting that Obama's financial analysis comes "at a sensitive moment, as rank and file federal workers earning various sums begin a two-year pay freeze."

Chris Edwards, a fellow at the libertarian Cato Institute, told the *Post* that "high-level staffers like Gibbs will go on to earn very high pay in the private sector as lobbyists, so we shouldn't shed tears about their supposedly 'modest pay' in government."

Others noted that -- given the hours that Gibbs puts in, and the demands of his job -- \$172,200 isn't that much, especially when compared with peers in the private sector.

John Gage, president of the American Federation of Government Employees, said in the *Post* that, "in this economy, when jobs are the issue, criticizing what people are making is just not the way to go. Him making \$172,000 I think just shows that's not very much pay for a job like that."

By the way, a few hours after he spoke with *The New York Times*, Obama issued a public statement about Gibbs, saluting the fact that his spokesman will continue his advocacy of administration policies:

For the last six years, Robert has been a close friend, one of my closest advisers and an effective advocate from the podium for what this administration has been doing to move America forward. I think it's natural for him to want to step back, reflect and retool. That brings up some challenges and opportunities for the White House -- but it doesn't change the important role that Robert will continue to play on our team.

Obama didn't mention salary.

(Posted by David Jackson)

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By J. Scott Applewhite, AP

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