



Federal workers earning double their private counterparts

Posted 1h 31m ago

By **Dennis Cauchon**, USA TODAY

At a time when workers' pay and benefits have stagnated, federal employees' average compensation has grown to more than double what private sector workers earn, a USA TODAY analysis finds.

Federal workers have been awarded bigger average pay and benefit increases than private employees for nine years in a row. The compensation gap between federal and private workers has doubled in the past decade.

Federal civil servants earned average pay and benefits of \$123,049 in 2009 while private workers made \$61,051 in total compensation, according to the Bureau of Economic Analysis. The data are the latest available.

The federal compensation advantage has grown from \$30,415 in 2000 to \$61,998 last year.

Public employee unions say the compensation gap reflects the increasingly high level of skill and education required for most federal jobs and the government contracting out lower-paid jobs to the private sector in recent years.

"The data are not useful for a direct public-private pay comparison," says Colleen Kelley, president of the [National Treasury Employees Union](#).

Chris Edwards, a budget analyst at the libertarian [Cato Institute](#), thinks otherwise. "Can't we now all agree that federal workers are overpaid and do something about it?" he asks.

Last week, President Obama ordered a freeze on bonuses for 2,900 political appointees. For the rest of the 2-million-person federal workforce, Obama asked for a 1.4% across-the-board pay hike in 2011, the smallest in more than a decade. Federal

workers also would qualify for seniority pay hikes.

Congressional [Republicans](#) want to cancel the across-the-board increase in 2011, which would save \$2.2 billion.

"Americans are fed up with public employee pay scales far exceeding that in the private sector," says Rep. [Eric Cantor](#), R-Va., the second-ranking Republican in the House.

Sen. Ted Kaufman, D-Del., says a pay freeze would unfairly scapegoat federal workers without addressing real budget problems.

What the data show:

•**Benefits.** Federal workers received average benefits worth \$41,791 in 2009. Most of this was the government's contribution to pensions. Employees contributed an additional \$10,569.

•**Pay.** The average federal salary has grown 33% faster than inflation since 2000. USA TODAY reported in March that the federal government pays an average of 20% more than private firms for comparable occupations. The analysis did not consider differences in experience and education.

•**Total compensation.** Federal compensation has grown 36.9% since 2000 after adjusting for inflation, compared with 8.8% for private workers.

Advertisement

USA TODAY
AutoPilot

The new travel app for iPhone® and iPod touch®

Presented by:

SEE HOW IT WORKS >>

Print Powered By FormatDynamics™