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FedBlog OUTSIDE THE BUREAUCRACY. LOOKING IN

Industry v. Position

By Alyssa Rosenberg Monday, August 31, 2009 1:06 PM

I [ribbed](#) Chris Edwards a little last week about the data he releases every year and uses that there should be a federal employee pay freeze. So I wanted to give him credit for [breaking down the data](#) a little further, and sorting out pay by industry. But I don't actually think that breaking out pay by industry answers the question Edwards' critics raise, which is that the most worthwhile comparison is going to be in pay by *occupation*.

Knowing that folks who work, in all capacities, in the oil and gas extraction industry, make more than federal employees in all occupations, or that people in rail transportation at all levels make less, doesn't actually tell us very much about factors relevant to compensation. Oil rigging is a dangerous job, so people get paid a lot to do it. But being an air traffic controller is also stressful, and a lot of people's lives depend on that job being done perfectly. Should the air traffic controller's pay get frozen on principle because the economy is bad and federal employee pay looks kind of high, at a time when aviation traffic is increasing, making moving traffic more complicated and higher-risk, and potentially requiring more overtime? Does knowing that oil riggers make a lot of money tell us anything about the appropriateness of compensation for federal managers? How should the increasing federal workload in many agencies--increased demand for food stamps, increased demand for oversight investigations, etc., be factored into our understanding of rising federal salaries? If the market should govern salaries, wouldn't it make sense for federal salaries to rise as there is increasing demand for federal products and services?

These are questions you need occupation-to-occupation comparisons to answer. I would love to see someone break out that data so we can discuss it. Hopefully, as the debate over the future of federal pay broadens, someone will.

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Time to take your head out of the sand, CS are extremely well compensated for what they do. The same data lays it out year after year.
If you doubt the data then why are there 10,000 apps for every job posting. The public know that CS pays exceptionally well has a golden parachute and a job for life.
dan m ketter Posted Monday, August 31, 2009 1:40 PM

Any data there Dan? Anything to support your claim of 10,000? What color is your parachute? Come on buddy, it's put up or shut up time.
bmj Posted Monday, August 31, 2009 11:26 PM

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Government Executive Staff Correspondent **Alyssa Rosenberg** takes a look at news affecting the management and operations of the massive federal bureaucracy.

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