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[Return to the Article](#)

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Public servants? No, we are the servants

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An [article](#) of mine at American Thinker, Taxpayers: Eat Your Hearts Out, Suckers outlined the myriad of abuses taxpayers suffer from the demands of government workers. I was not writing about the rules and regulations, or the rudeness and inefficiency and incompetency that many of us suffer when dealing with government workers (not all, mind you, but many). I was instead writing about the gold-plated contracts and benefit packages government workers enjoy, courtesy of you and I. Even if government workers were superlative, however, they are still vastly overpaid. This is made clear in an [op-ed](#) in today's Boston Globe by Jeff Jacoby and by an article in the new conservative publication, National Affairs, which uses California as the textbook example of what happens when politicians serve the desires of public workers rather than the needs of private citizens.

Jacoby [writes](#) about the myth of the underpaid public employee:

Take account of total compensation - wages plus benefits - and the disparity [between public and private sector employees] is even more striking. In 2008, total federal civilian compensation averaged \$119,982 - more than twice the \$59,908 in wages and benefits earned by the average private-sector employee. Chris Edwards, a scholar at the Cato Institute, has documented the [steady widening of the gap](#): In 1960, federal workers averaged \$1.24 for every \$1 earned by a private employee. By 1980, the federal advantage was up to \$1.51; in 2000 it was \$1.66. Now it is \$2 - and climbing. [When ranked alongside 72 industries](#) that span the US economy, federal employees take home the seventh-highest average compensation. Among the workers they outearn, Edwards shows, are those in such fields as computer systems design, chemical products, and legal services.

It isn't only at the federal level that the political class so handsomely takes care of its own. "State and local government workers get paid an average of \$25.30 an hour, which is 33 percent higher than the private sector's \$19," [Forbes magazine reports](#).

He provides examples of the dreams of public workers being fulfilled at our expense. He also notes that the resistance grows and profiles the work

of one principled businessman who has had enough and has founded a group-The Free Enterprise Nation-to try to inform the public about the impact of these plush payrolls on our future.

The second [article](#) portrays the downfall of California as being the result of bad government policy. One of the causes of the fiscal basket case that is California: public labor unions. Among the worst are the powerful teachers' unions: one of the most powerful of Democratic interest groups. Teachers spend a lot of their free time-and they often have plenty-canvassing for Democrats, handing out flyers, manning phone boots, funding campaigns. The payoff? Great pay and benefit packages from politicians in their pockets.

The percentage of unionized public employees in California is 20% higher than the national average.... Awarded collective bargaining rights with nearly every sector of government during the 1960s and '70s, the unions subsequently exploded into a political force to be reckoned with and a primary cause of California's fiscal hemophilia.

The result of the teachers' flight from responsibility has been unadulterated dysfunction. In Los Angeles schools, one out of every three students drops out before graduation. And a research team from the University of California, Riverside, recently concluded that by 2014 - the year all students are required to be proficient in math and English under No Child Left Behind - nearly every elementary school in the state will fail to meet proficiency standards. [...]

But no matter how egregious their misconduct, California's public-school teachers can always skirt the consequences. With 340,000 members statewide, the California Teachers' Association is perhaps the most powerful interest group in state politics. In 2005, for instance, the organization spent nearly \$60 million to defeat ballot measures aimed at bringing more accountability to California schools.

These contracts are killers. They are black holes that will suck in vast amounts of our money-investments that could go towards our childrens' futures instead get sucked up, along with the pina coladas, by retired government workers relaxing on a beach. Public workers are not public servants. We are the servants.

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