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Analysis: Ohio generous with public salaries

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While Ohio is among many states cutting budgets and limiting collective bargaining rights for its public employee unions, the state continues to be generous with salaries.

The median personal income for all Ohioans is \$31,284, but public employees of the state of Ohio had a median pay about 33 percent higher at \$41,350 last year. And nearly 1,000 state employees made more than \$100,000 in 2010, according to a Dayton Business Journal review of state worker pay provided by the Ohio Department of Administrative Services.

This does not include employees of state colleges, which often have administration officials and even athletic department employees who earn more than \$100,000.

[Click here for the salary database of 60,000 state of Ohio employees.](#)

Matt Mayer, president of the Buckeye Institute for Public Policy Solutions noted in a statement last year that public salaries are of such importance that they should be open to the public.

"The Ohio State salary data is another step in bringing full transparency to Ohio government," Mayer said.

Public employee salaries have come under intense scrutiny as officials from the federal level down to the smallest of municipalities are looking for ways to offset looming budget shortfalls.

A [report by the Cato Institute](#) referred to public worker pay as "generous" and suggested wage freezes as a way to cut costs. The report also said that for 2008, wages and benefits costs topped \$1.1 trillion nationwide and accounted for half of total state and local government spending.

Another recent report by the Cato Institute found that public workers are three times less likely to quit their jobs than private sector workers, suggesting that was evidence that compensation for public workers was too high.

[Poll: Are state of Ohio public employees overpaid?](#)

The issue of pay for public workers heated up last summer when word got out that Bell, Calif. was paying its city manager nearly \$800,000, the backlash was swift. Residents were furious and national news outlets jumped on the story, putting salaries for city officials under scrutiny across the country.

Several Bell officials have since been arrested and ordered stand trial on charges of misappropriation of public funds and conflict of interest.

However, that often is seen as an isolated case, and officials from public employee unions contend that most public servants are not overpaid.

And in [a DBJ report last year on pay for local officials](#) and city workers in Dayton and Springfield, the region's politicians and industry experts said public salaries generally are not too high.

Jim Bodenmiller, Springfield city manager, said some top officials are worth high salaries, and that attracting top talent is difficult when competing with private sector employers.

"Like it or not, governments are like large businesses in many respects and there's a lot of responsibility in those positions," he said.

Michele Frisby, a spokesperson for the **International City/County Management Association**, said the California case has forced city leaders across the U.S. to defend, or at least explain, their salaries.

"The ridiculous salary that was being paid to the Bell (Calif.) city manager is so unusual; most salaries are in-line with standards for the profession and are certainly not that competitive to private sector or they don't surpass private sector salaries," Frisby said at the time.

Although the median state public employee pay is higher than Ohio's overall median wage, the state boasts many large companies paying top salaries. For example, the Buckeye State is home to 27 Fortune 500 companies such as **Kroger Co.**, **Procter & Gamble**, **Macy's Inc.**, **Eaton Corp.** and **Fifth Third Bancorp.**

And officials say they are competing with those top companies when they hire talent for top administrative positions, warranting competitive pay packages.

In addition to Ohio public workers, the DBJ previously compiled a salary database for several local cities and for all Ohio public school teachers.

- [Click here for database of Ohio teachers salaries](#) that can be searched by school district or by county.
- [Click here for database of Dayton city employee salaries](#) that can be searched by name or salary range.
- [Click here for database of Springfield city employees salaries](#) that can be searched by name or salary range.

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