

Private sector employee suffers more than government worker

Staff Reports

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This letter was inspired by the 2 percent pay raise that Congress gave federal employees for 2010 in spite of the greatest economic pain since the Great Depression. Maybe Congress felt guilty because it had voted its members an automatic annual 3 percent increase several years ago to avoid the embarrassment of having to vote annually to raise their own pay.

In researching background information, I found some startling facts about federal, state and local employee pay. First, federal employees' average wages with benefits were \$119,982 in 2008, versus private industry total compensation of \$59,909. Average federal compensation levels are twice industry levels.

In 2008, annual compensation for South Carolina state and local government employees was \$60,870, \$3,770 higher than North Carolina and \$6,148 higher than Georgia. Gov. Mark Sanford was right: Our state government is costing too much.

In addition to high pay in relationship to the civilian sector, government employees enjoy job security with turnover rates that are one-fourth that of the private sector.

The statistics above are from Cato Institute publications. Cato is a respected Libertarian think tank in Washington, D.C.

What good does it do us to know this? Not much. It does tell us that our governmental employees are comparatively well paid and we and our elected officials should not need to feel guilt if we require government employees to share the pain of income reductions that are afflicting much of the civilian population.

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