

WIRED WORKPLACE: A Look at Issues Facing Federal IT Workers

Are Feds Overpaid?

BY BRITTANY BALLESTEDT 03/05/10 04:06 pm ET

USA Today has an interesting [article](#) that claims that federal employees earn higher average salaries than private-sector workers in several occupations, including information technology. According to Bureau of Labor Statistics data, federal workers earned an average salary of \$67,691 in 2008 for occupations that exist both in government and the private sector, while average pay for the same jobs in the private sector was \$60,046 in 2008, the article states.

More specifically, IT jobs like computer information systems managers working for the federal government earned an average of \$122,020, compared to average earnings of \$115,705 in the private sector in 2008. Computer support specialists working for the federal government made less, however, earning an average of \$45,830 in 2008, compared with average earnings of \$54,875 in the private sector, the article states.

The issue of comparing federal and private sector pay has long been an issue of debate. Federal unions and other employee groups contend that using BLS data fails to account for the fact that many federal workers have advanced degrees and perform work that requires more complexity and more skill than work in the private sector. The Federal Salary Council reported in October that the pay gap between public and private sector workers increased from 25.17 percent in 2008 to 26.42 percent in 2009.

Cato Institute scholar Chris Edwards [argued on Cato's blog](#) on Friday, however, that federal unions are simply wrong, largely because the Federal Salary Council has reported that the pay gap has increased from 22 percent in 2001 to 25 percent in 2008, all while data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis shows that federal salaries rose 46 percent between 2001 and 2008. "Since the BEA data are extremely solid, there must be something wrong with the official pay gap methodology," Edwards writes.

What is your response to these assessments? Are federal workers, particularly those working in IT, earning higher average salaries than those with similar private sector jobs?

COMMENTS

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The issue is the report doesn't include the salaries of Defense Contractors nor does it include larger industry companies. For example I am a government civilian GS14 (by choice). I make about \$119,238 per year with locality pay. With benefits the government pays a total of about \$148K. The information is public on OPM site (<http://www.opm.gov/oca/10tables/html/dcb.asp>).

I have a team of defense contractors that work for me. One of the senior folks about the same skills as myself makes about \$260K per year that does not include G&A/Overhead Benefits etc. The total cost for them is \$468 per year depending on the G&A and Overhead. FOIA s couple of contracts and see. The average salary of defense contractors are double what the government salaries are and more than 3 times the cost..... Call me silly but the math doesn't add up

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