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Scott Brown and what federal workers really earn

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A recent column by Joe Davidson [["A workforce that has earned every penny,"](#) Federal Diary, Feb. 3] took an unfair swipe at Sen. Scott Brown (R-Mass.) for saying that "federal employees are making twice as much as their private counterparts." The senator was accurately citing data on wages and benefits from the Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Mr. Davidson's column said that federal workers suffer from a pay gap, but that supposed gap only includes wages, not benefits. Yet benefits account for 34 percent of federal compensation and are extremely generous, as BEA data confirm.

His column also mentioned that the federal workforce is highly skilled. But that has long been the case, so it doesn't explain the rapid rise in federal pay in recent years. From 2000 to 2008, average federal compensation soared 57 percent, compared with a 31 percent increase in the private sector. A recent analysis of Office of Personnel Management data revealed that federal pay continued sharply upward in 2009.

Given these trends, [Mr. Brown's proposed freeze on federal salaries](#) would be a good first step toward reducing the rising costs of the government workforce.

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