

Slash Top Federal Salaries

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Are you ready for another insane aspect of American society? Read this and get angry.

People on the right want smaller government. People on the left bemoan high unemployment, economic inequality and the huge amounts of money made by corporate executives and Wall Street fat cats. I strongly urge consideration of a common sense way of greatly reducing the bloated cost of the federal government, probably opening up hundreds of thousands of jobs, and making Americans feel better about their government.

Here is the first question: Under what circumstances is a federal worker likely to lose their job? By dying. Not poor performance, not misconduct, and not a layoff because of government downsizing. The federal government only fired about one half of one percent of its workforce last year, even though every day there are news stories that reveal gross incompetence of federal employees, like the ones who did not stop Bernie Madoff, the ones who let the bankster crooks cripple our economy, and the idiots that sanctioned the Solyndra handout. At a time when most workers suffer from job insecurity, federal workers have nearly 100 percent job security. Most of the few that lose their jobs are at the lowest salaries in blue collar jobs.

In contrast, the private sector fires six times more, at about 3 percent, of workers annually for performance alone, according to [USA Today](#). And clearly the horrendous high unemployment level for the nation signifies the loss of many jobs as US companies sent jobs to other countries and closed facilities. Ridiculous job security for federal workers is not the most disturbing story.

What should make Americans' heads explode is how many federal workers make over \$100,000 a year, a salary that most Americans can only dream of. If you ask what fraction of federal workers makes more than \$100,000 a year, hardly anyone will come close to the truth. Or if you ask what number of federal workers makes more than \$100,000, virtually no one will be in the ball park. Go ahead. Write down your answers to these two questions.

Here is the insanity that should drive Americans nuts: Over 20 percent of the 2.14 million federal workforce makes over \$100,000, which equates to about 500,000 people making enormous salaries in these tough economic times. Besides ludicrous job security they also have incredible fringe benefits. Is this your idea of public servants?

I say it is time to enact legislation that would place a limit of \$100,000 on federal jobs. Time for shared sacrifice. Time to attack the national deficit and debt. Time to send a message that those who pay taxes should not be providing such luxurious salaries to federal workers.

Note that 10 departments or independent agencies have average salaries above

\$100,000—topped by the Securities and Exchange Commission, where the average is nearly \$150,000. Average! Nearly 80,000 federal employees have higher salaries than the governors of the states where they live.

To make all this insanity even more absurd consider the result of a [new survey](#) of federal workers that found the government wide average for job satisfaction at just 68 percent. Apparently, making terrific salaries with near certain job security is not enough to produce really high job satisfaction. At the SEC where the average salary is nearly \$150,000 the job satisfaction level was just 61 percent.

A great [CATO Institute report](#) on overpaid federal workers made the important point that the annual cost of about \$230 billion could and should be cut. A job-to-job comparison found that federal workers earned higher wages than did private-sector workers in four-fifths of the occupations examined. Most Americans would agree with the view that “The federal workforce has become an elite island of secure and high-paid workers, separated from the ocean of average American workers competing in the global economy.”

This report also noted that: “Between late 2007 and mid-2009, the number of federal workers earning more than \$150,000 more than doubled, even as the economy fell into a deep recession during that period.” Here is one example of the absurdity of high federal salaries: “The 62 employees of the US Department of Agriculture’s Office of Chief Economist earned an average \$177,000 each in wages and benefits in 2010.” And when the recession started, the Transportation Department had only one person earning a salary of \$170,000 or more. Eighteen months later, 1,690 employees had salaries above \$170,000.

Add this: “In 2009, federal workers enjoyed average benefits of \$41,791, which compared to average benefits in the U.S. private sector of just \$10,589.”

I say create a notice period of perhaps six months and tell all federal workers making more than \$100,000 a year that their salaries will be reduced to that figure, with the possible exception of those directly working to protect public health or safety. If they want to quit the federal government, fine. Let them quit and open up jobs that countless Americans can apply for, eager to make just \$100,000 and perhaps a lot less.

Roughly, \$20 billion or more could be saved annually by cutting high federal salaries, which is a huge potential way to cut the budget deficit. Why aren’t President Obama and other presidential candidates talking about all this? Why is there no national attention to the ludicrous high cost for federal workers in this period when probably a third of the population is suffering economically? And make no mistake, the \$100,000 limit should apply to members of Congress, especially when hardly anyone has a positive view of their performance.

This is something that Democrats, Republicans and independents should demand.

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