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Corporate sneakiness. Government waste. Technology run amok. Outright scams. The Red Tape Chronicles is MSNBC.com's effort to unmask these 21st Century headaches and offer real solutions that save you time and money.

Bob Sullivan covers Internet scams and consumer fraud for MSNBC.com. He is the winner of multiple journalism awards for his coverage of online crime and author of [Gotcha Capitalism: How Hidden Fees Rip You Off Every Day and What You Can Do About It](#), and [Your Evil Twin: Behind the Identity Theft Epidemic](#).

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20 GOVERNMENT WORKERS WITH SUPER-SIZED PAY 20

government workers with super-sized pay

Posted: Tuesday, October 5 2010 at 05:00 am CT by Bob Sullivan

State and local government budgets are by all accounts in dire straits. Last year, collectively, they faced a \$100 billion budget shortfall. After 12 months of belt tightening, emergency aid, layoffs and tax hikes, things are even worse. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities said in a report this year that the gap could be \$140 billion. And last week, respected analyst Meredith Whitney suggested that state governments will collapse unless the federal government offers a trillion-dollar bailout that will rival the bank bailout of 2008.

And yet, across America, many government workers are getting rich off taxpayer-funded salaries. City managers get free luxury cars, firefighters get half-million-dollar lump payments and, in California, one city worker is being paid \$500,000 annually during retirement. In New York state, \$100,000 salaries can't be called rich, but at a time when unemployment remains near 10 percent, there are 99,000 state and local workers bringing home six figure salaries.

Two weeks ago we published a survey of government workers with super-sized salaries and invited Red Tape Chronicles readers to do some digging. You weren't shy. More than 1,000 tips came streaming in via e-mail, Facebook, Twitter and this blog, and we researched each one. Here are the best – or worst -- examples you sent.

1. Phoenix – double-dipping top cop



Phoenix.gov

Two frequent causes of outsized government worker pay are so-called “double-dipping” and lump sum retirement payouts due to banked sick time, vacation and other benefits. In the case of Phoenix top cop Jack Harris, we have both. Harris retired from his post as police chief in 2007, receiving a one-time payment of \$562,000 and beginning to draw his annual pension of \$90,000. Two weeks later, the city rehired him as its “public safety manager” – critics say he’s doing exactly the same job -- at a base salary of \$193,000 per

year. While it's common around the country for police officers and other government workers to retire, collect their pension and keep working, the state of Arizona passed a law specifically banning the practice earlier this decade. Conservative think tank Judicial Watch has filed a lawsuit in Maricopa County on behalf of a local resident, alleging the Harris is breaking this law.

“It appears that the senior law enforcement official in the city is gaming the system,” said Judicial Watch’s Christopher Farrell. “That is deeply corrosive to the whole sense of the rule of law.” Farrell said he doesn't spite Harris his pension, but both the end-run of state law and the high salary –

particularly at a time when Phoenix police were threatened with hundreds of layoffs – are egregious, Farrell said. “It’s a gag reflex kind of thing.”

David Leibowitz, spokesman for Phoenix Mayor Phil Gordon, said that Judicial Watch’s lawsuit is politically motivated and maintained that Harris’ compensation is in line with police chief pay in other major U.S. cities.

“The chief has served the city of Phoenix for many years. He’s incredibly well qualified and his salary and total compensation is well within line with the largest cities in America,” Leibowitz said.

Phoenix is America’s fifth-largest city. The seventh-largest, San Antonio, pays Police Chief William McManus \$183,000. Philadelphia, which is nearly the same size as Phoenix, pays Police Commissioner Charles H. Ramsey \$195,000, [though his pay will be cut to \\$187,500 this year](#).

Leibowitz said the method for arriving at Harris’ salary shouldn’t be a consideration.

“You (should) look at the overall money you are spending ... and put it in context of the results you are getting,” he said. “It’s really cost effective. ... We want people in Phoenix to believe they live in the safest large city in America.”

Meanwhile, Phoenix pays a pretty penny to many other uniformed officers. There are 180 police officers and firefighters earning more than \$100,000 annually. And fully 90 percent of the agency’s budget goes to salaries, [according to AZCentral.com](#).

2. In California: A pension check and an unemployment check ?

As we’ve seen, it’s common for government workers to quit, collect a pension, and then go back to work. What happens when these double dippers get laid off due to budget constraints? In California, they collect unemployment checks, discovered recently thanks to some great reporting by the Sacramento Bee. There’s no hard data on these special kinds of double dippers, but to give you a flavor, [reporter Robert Lewis found](#) that 53 former sheriff’s deputies in Sacramento County collected a total of \$300,000 in unemployment benefits last year, along with their regular pensions.

3. In Illinois suburb, a \$435K parks director with a \$166K pension

There is little debate about the ticking time bomb of state government pension obligations, which total an estimated \$2 trillion nationwide. How did that number get so high so fast? In many cases, pension loopholes are exploited, exploited and exploited again. In Highland Park, Ill., a northern Chicago suburb, park district Executive Director Ralph Volpe and the local parks commission provide an instructive example. Volpe’s salary in 2008 was \$164,000, but the commission added \$270,000 in bonuses. That raise was nice, but even nicer was the step up in his pension, which is based on an his last-year salary. The bonuses helped bump Volpe’s pension up by more than \$50,000 per year. The \$166,000 he’ll make annually now that he’s retired exceeds his top base salary for the job. Residents forced three parks commissioners to resign after the deal [was exposed by the Chicago Tribune](#), but they still have to pay Volpe for life.

3. In Bellwood, Ill., \$250,000 for life

Meanwhile, west of Chicago, Roy McCampbell, a retired city administrator in Bellwood, earned \$472,000 in 2009 – tops for any municipal worker in the state. His base salary was a modest \$129,000, but that was beefed up by a series of enhancements, including \$126,000 for unused sick and vacation days. Salary sleuths should take a close look at government workers’ vacation and sick day provisions. They are often a contract sweetener used to disguise the real cost of a contract. McCampbell’s last-year windfall raised his pension by \$70,000 per year. He now holds the top pension payout in Illinois, \$250,000 annually. That’s more than the price of most single-family

homes in Bellwood, a primarily African-American, working-class town of 20,000 with a per capita income of \$24,000 and an average home value under \$200,000. Of the 138 homes recently sold in the town, according to Zillow.com, the top price was \$182,000.

[The Tribune also brought McCampbell's story to light.](#)

4. Miami – Amid budget crisis, average salary is \$100,000

How bad are things in Miami? Earlier this year County Manager George Burgess sent a memo out urging employees to stop buying bottled water. This came as the city was facing a \$118 million budget shortfall and the mayor was calling for nearly 200 staff layoffs.

Meanwhile, Burgess' salary and benefits package totaled \$425,000 last year. It includes use of a 2010 Infiniti M35, which cost taxpayers \$30,000 for a three-year lease, [according to the Palm Beach Post](#).

Miami has plenty of well-paid employees. Nearly 100 earn more than \$200,000 per year, costing the city \$23 million annually, [according to a 2009 analysis by the Biscayne Times](#) (pdf). And 1,751 of the city's 3,964 workers earn six-figure paychecks. Fully 80 percent of the city's budget is devoted to salaries, a crushing amount that leaves precious little for parks or road improvements.

5. Laughlin, Nev. – Burning down, or burning through cash?

Laughlin is a tiny Nevada border gambling town, a little Las Vegas for Northern Arizona residents. Not including tourists, the city had a population of 7,000 during the last Census. Last year its top 10 employees pulled in nearly \$3 million in pay, making it a perfect example of another bane of taxpayers— overtime pay.

As KLAS-TV in Nevada noted in a recent story about excessive overtime pay, “One might expect the town of Laughlin to be a blazing inferno.” One Laughlin firefighter alone earned \$92,000 in overtime pay last year.

Laughlin is in Clark County, which also includes Las Vegas. Other firefighters from around the county [are also well compensated](#). The two top earners, who collected \$474,000 and \$444,000, were firefighters who won large disability payments, according to KLAS.

The nearby city of Henderson, also in Clark County, [generates some heavy paystubs, too](#). The assistant city attorney earned \$550,000, including \$433,000 in a one-time payout; the city attorney earned \$435,000, \$350,000 of it in a one-time payout, and a fire battalion chief earned \$400,000, almost all from a one-time payout. Not to be outdone, North Las Vegas' assistant fire chief earned \$661,000.

6. Clarkstown, N.Y. -- an average salary of \$150,000

Clarkstown, N.Y., is a pretty town of 85,000 about an hour north of New York City. But an ugly taxpayer revolt is under way there, in part because of police salaries. Disclosures that retiring police Capt. Thomas Purtill pulled down \$543,000 last year -- tops for all municipal workers in New York state -- led to creation of the “Disgusted Taxpayers of Clarkstown” political action committee and an organization called simply “Clarkstown Taxpayers.”

Purtill's earnings included a one-time \$250,000 payout to settle a dispute over sick pay. According to the local Journal News newspaper, Purtill injured his back in 2006 and was only able to work two days per week until he retired. In 2008, he earned \$335,000.

Purtill wasn't alone: Four of the top 10 municipal workers among the state's 1,500 municipalities were Clarkstown cops. Nearly 150 of Clarkstown's 173-member police force earned six figure salaries in 2009, not including overtime, for an average salary of \$151,000.

8. Norfolk, Va.-- a great \$29,000 a year job

Twelve years ago, Jill McGlone, an employee of the Norfolk Community Services Board, was placed on administrative leave during a personnel investigation. She never set foot in the office again, but no one seemed to notice. McGlone continued to draw paychecks – including regular raises – for 12 years, until her story was brought to light this year. Her salary last year was \$29,000. Local officials are befuddled by the incident, and five employees have lost their jobs since McGlone's no-show job came to light. A criminal investigation has begun, [according to the Virginian-Pilot](#).

The city manager of Norfolk earns \$213,000 in base salary, by the way, according to data collected by the Pilot. Two assistant city managers split \$300,000, and two assistants to the city manager earn about \$90,000 in base pay while serving the city of 230,000.

9. Jefferson County, Ala. -- money flushed down the sewer

In Alabama, Jefferson County Attorney Jeff Sewell earns \$375,000. Given that his county is in the biggest financial mess in the entire country and the nation's biggest-ever government bankruptcy is looming, the salary doesn't look too bad. It looks like an outright bargain compared to the \$500-per-hour salary being paid to John S. Young, a court-appointed receiver who's trying to figure out how the county will catch up on \$500 million in default payments. In case you're wondering, \$500 per hour equals roughly a \$1 million annual salary, assuming he puts in 40 hours a week and takes two weeks vacation.

Jefferson County, which includes Birmingham, started down the road to perdition in 1994, when it was sued over a failing sewer system. The county began construction of a new one to satisfy a judgment, but costs ballooned to \$3 billion. Unable to service the debt, the county turned to Wall Street for help. Investment banks sold officials on credit default swaps and other tricky funding mechanisms. We all know how that worked out. In this case, the county ended up with swaps that made it liable for nearly \$6 billion. Now Jefferson County is in danger of becoming America's largest government bankruptcy in history – shattering the old record of \$1.7 billion set by Orange County, Calif., in 1994. Incidentally, nearly two dozen government officials have been jailed over shady deals and alleged bribery by brokers competing for the county's business.

Bloomberg [ran an excellent history of the doomed project](#) earlier this year, including this tragic sentence:

"Through a long series of ill-conceived financial transactions, the sewer ratepayers of Jefferson County have been saddled with a debt of roughly \$11,491 per residential sewer customer." Bad Wall Street bets raised the city's interest on debt from 3 percent to 10 percent almost overnight, increasing its debt service payment from \$10 million to \$23 million, which is why the county simply can't pay its bills.

Young, who left a private sector water company job that brought him \$1.6 million in 2008 to take on the receivership, told local journalists that he was worth it, as he expected to negotiate significant interest and fee discounts from creditors

"I know I have more value than the price they're paying me," he told John Archibald of the Birmingham News.

10. Pahrump, Nev. – Heidi Fleiss, a DA, and two crashes, DUI in one day

Robert Beckett's job is to prosecute crimes in an almost-forgotten part of Nevada called Nye County that borders Death Valley. At \$105,000 annually, his pay is set by the state, and doesn't sound egregious for an attorney with 16 years on the job. But Beckett allegedly helped himself to additional funding and committed other crimes, making his salary seem quite excessive.

In 2008, midway through his fourth term, Beckett crashed a county-owned Ford Expedition in the desert near Shoshone, Calif. Six hours later, he crashed a Dodge pickup truck on the same highway. Soon after, he failed a breath alcohol test, [according to the Associated Press](#).

Then, in May, he was arrested in his office and charged with 20 counts of fraudulent appropriation of property for allegedly raiding a "bad check fund." Nevertheless, he continued his campaign for election to a fifth term before losing in a June primary.

The pressure was apparently too much for him. In September, former famed Hollywood Madam Heidi Fleiss – who now operates a laundry business in Pahrump -- called police to report a suspicious vehicle parked near her home. Inside was Beckett, police say, asleep behind the wheel of a county-issued vehicle. Beckett later failed a breath test and was arrested.

"I feel bad for the guy, but drunk driving is like shooting a gun in a crowd of people," Fleiss reportedly told the Pahrump Valley Times. "If I'd known it was him, I never would have called the police. I would have told him to lay down in the guest house and sleep it off."

11. Utah Transit Authority John English



UTA

Utah is among the most forward-thinking mass transit states in the United States, as Salt Lake boasts a modern and rapidly expanding light rail system that is the envy of many cities. Still, General Manager John English's salary of \$350,000 last year -- [exceeded the pay of top transportation bosses in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Denver and Phoenix](#). English even makes more than the head of the highly scrutinized Washington, D.C., Metro system chief John Catoe, who was paid \$315,000 annually before stepping down earlier this year. And it's roughly equal to New York City transportation chief Jay Walder's, who is currently facing calls to accept a salary cut amid fare hikes and service cuts.

CALIFORNIA – A special section

Bell, Calif. started the era of outrage over public servant pay with revelations that the city manager was earning \$800,000 per year. That story spurred several news outfits and bloggers to hunt for the second highest-paid government worker in California. As is the case with these things, it all depends on how you count. So we've included a representative sample of highly compensated public officials. Many of them came to light because the League of California Cities, in response to the Bell incident, conducted a statewide survey of city manager compensation, which it released on Sept. 10. Aware of the target this placed on their backs, many managers included extensive explanations in the "special issues" field, [which makes for amusing reading if you have the time](#). In all, 16 city managers pulled down more than \$300,000 in salary last year, the survey found.

12. Escondido City Manager Clay Phillips is not the best paid city manager, though his base salary of \$225,000 is nothing to sneeze at. But his contract is typical, and offers benefits most workers could only dream of, inflating the city's cost of his employment to \$326,000. According to the [San](#)

[Diego Union Tribune](#), he receives than 14 weeks of paid time off every year, along with a \$9,000 auto allowance, a \$1,000 computer stipend, a full \$15,000 contribution to his 401 (k), and a life insurance policy. As another perk, he's allowed to bring his spouse on up to three conference trips every year, all expenses paid. His contract also has a clause that is somewhat like the "franchise player" status in the NFL. His salary can never drop below the third-highest city manager in San Diego County.

13. Bruce Channing of Laguna Hills is one of 16 city managers reporting salaries north of \$300,000 – Channing earned \$321,000. His municipality of 33,000 also provides him with use of a \$60,000 Toyota Sequoia SUV. [A local report](#) suggests his benefits package is worth more than \$400,000, but Channing disputes that.

14. Stephen H. Williams of Palmdale, earned \$367,518, making him appear to be the top-paid city manager in post-Bell California. But he indicated in his disclosure that his salary appeared to be inflated because that amount included a "Banked Leave Time Cashout of \$93,360.05," a "Stipend for Waiving Health" worth \$600, an auto allowance worth \$7,200 and \$1,508 in life insurance premiums.

15. Joe Tait of San Juan Capistrano, a relatively small hamlet of 36,000, earned \$324,000 last year, but didn't initially show up on the high-salary radar because he actually holds two jobs with that city – city manager and utilities director. Both pay him less than \$200,000 per year. City officials defended the arrangement, [according to the Orange County Register](#), by saying Tait actually saves them money.

16. Vernon -- Tait has nothing on Bruce Malkenhorst, however, who until recently held five jobs in the industrial the city of Vernon – population 96. He served as manager, clerk, treasurer, finance director, redevelopment director and utilities director. Now retired, Malkenhorst is the state's top pensioner, collecting \$500,000 per year. He's but one of 24 California retirees receiving more than \$200,000 annually, and one of nearly 5,000 earning six-figure pensions. While Malkenhorst cashes the checks, he is awaiting trial on charges he embezzled \$60,000 while in office. Meanwhile, [the Los Angeles Times has reported](#) that Malkenhorst's salary has actually been underreported, and that in 2005 he actually earned \$910,000.

17. San Ramon -- Since Malkenhorst is retired, the title of highest paid city manager could fall to Herbert Moniz, who helps run San Ramon, a town of 64,000 in Contra Cost County. Moniz earned \$359,000 last year, after receiving a 10 percent raise in 2008, according to the local Patch.com site. [He presides over a payroll of 582](#) – 101 of whom earned more than \$100,000 last year. Meanwhile, the city is cutting services: drop-in fees at senior centers are going up, street sweeping has been reduced to once per month, landscaping has been cut back and the city's aquatic center will close more often next year, [according to a newsletter recently sent to residents recently](#).

18. San Francisco - Of course, city managers aren't the only California city employees with salaries that appear outsized. In San Francisco, there is considerable consternation over the salary of Deputy Police Chief Charles Keohane, who retired in the middle of 2009 but still ended up as the highest-paid city worker, earning \$516,000 with one-time payouts for vacation and sick days. Asked how he felt about it, Keohane [told the San Francisco Chronicle](#), "Not so good, if it's going to get my name in the paper."

Keohane was hardly alone in the six-figure ranks of city employees, however. Six city workers eclipsed \$300,000 (including four police officers) and nearly 100 earned \$200,000. In all, nearly 10,000 San Francisco workers – or one-third of the workforce -- earned \$100,000 or more last year, when including overtime pay. While we're in the City by the Bay, we can also mention that one in five of the city's 5,000 transit workers – who are employed by a separate agency -- also eclipses \$100,000, too.

19. Avenal, Calif. -- It might be easy to miss an entirely different set of well-paid government employees – those who work in special agencies or commissions. Fortunately, Red Tape readers sent in plenty of examples. Here's one: Timothy Malan, chief dentist of the state correctional facility in Avenal. Being a dentist to prisoners is probably an awful job, but he's well compensated – earning \$621,000 last year. In fact, [The Washington Times reported](#) that 37 state dentists earned \$290,000 or more last year.

20. State Compensation Insurance Fund – The more arcane and obscure the agency, the more likely you'll find surprisingly large paychecks, like the one granted to Janet Frank for running the state's workers comp program – she earned \$1.6 million during a two-year stint. In one of the most dramatic stories of paycheck inflation as you'll ever read, Los Angeles Times reporter Michael Rothfeld reported how an agency already rocked by scandal recruited a top-notch candidate with a \$450,000 salary and a \$140,000 signing bonus in 2008. By the time those expensive two years had passed, [Frank had somehow accumulated \\$107,000 worth of unused vacation days](#) when she cashed out and went home to Colorado.

It's not too late for you to get in on the fun. Here's a list of some resources to get you started. Find out how many six-figure salaries your tax dollars are supporting.

STATE AND LOCAL PAY LOOKUP WEB SITES

California

<http://www.sacbee.com/statepay/>

Connecticut

<http://ctsunlight.org>

Illinois

<http://accountability.illinois.gov/>

Massachusetts

<http://www.bostonherald.com/projects/payroll/massachusetts>

Missouri

<http://mapyourtaxes.mo.gov/MAP/Employees/>

New York

<http://www.seethroughny.net/Home/tabid/36/Default.aspx>

New Jersey

<http://www.mycentraljersey.com/section/DATAUNIVERSE25/Datauniverse-State-Employees-2010>
http://www.nj.com/news/index.ssf/2010/09/nj_police_salaries_rank_highes.html

Nevada

<http://transparentnevada.com/salaries/>

Ohio

<http://buckeyeinstitute.org/state-salary>

Oklahoma

<http://www.ok.gov/okaa/>

Oregon

<http://theoregonpolitico.com/govdocs/>

South Carolina

<http://www.thestate.com/localsalaries/>

Texas

<http://www.texastribune.org/library/data/government-employee-salaries/>

Utah

http://www.utahsright.com/h_salaries.php

If your state/city isn't listed here, try these two compendiums:

http://sunshinereview.org/index.php/Public_employee_salary

and

<http://pibuzz.com/government-pay/>

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 **245 COMMENTS**

Election day is coming. All I see on T.V. ARE THESE WANT A BE POLITICIANS DISKING EACH OTHER. Lie, stretch the truth, cheat do what ever to get elected.I don't believe there is a honest and truthful Democratic or Republican politician out there to be found. What happens if no one votes for any of these crooks? They can not be TRUSTED WITH OUR MONEY.

Rocky Life, Orlando, Fl. (Sent Oct 5, 2010 12:10:09 PM)

it is so easy to spend other people's money.

H. Leo Evans, Heath, Texas (Sent Oct 5, 2010 12:09:49 PM)

This is outrageous! And notice they're all white men....and people wonder why women and minorities are rebellious and angry. These dudes did the dirty deeds among themselves, skewered the law in favor of themselves.

Sally Wright, Chicago, IL (Sent Oct 5, 2010 12:09:30 PM)

Guess these folks haven't seen wages in my state where many of the state employees earn so little we actually qualify for welfare assistance and our insurance is going up in price plus add the fact of increased copays and new deductibles....as for the Clarkson folks, well you try and get a decent house there with pay less than 100K/yr, not possible so think of your market before you balk...as for the double dippers yes shame on them let us close those loop holes...

Judy C Johnson City TN (Sent Oct 5, 2010 12:09:22 PM)

I agree that you can not lump the workers at the federal, state, county, or local level in with the people at the top. The truth is that those at the top will often abuse their position to reap rewards far and above what is reasonable and that is true in both the public and private sector.

Darian (Sent Oct 5, 2010 12:08:52 PM)

Time for taxpayers revolt. Let's stop paying our federal, state and property taxes for one year!

Turnando Fuad (Sent Oct 5, 2010 12:08:38 PM)

These are severe cases. Before we go off the edge with our torches and pitch forks let's bear in mind that we want to attract the best and brightest into public service. A personal dedication to public service only gets you part of the way there; we need to pay public officials and servants enough that they can afford to live in the communities they serve and have job and retirement security. Otherwise, you get a revolving door of people and policies and you get a minimum wage worker mentality.

And quit bashing the unions. Labor is a resource like anything else. They have a right to bargain for the highest wages and job and retirement security they can get. If you don't want to pay them so much, then get that in the contract.

Matt McNeil (Sent Oct 5, 2010 12:08:29 PM)

In the city of Indio, CA, there are three judges in the court who had mistresses who were working as clerks in the same court...they got caught so ended up marrying these clerks, they have all continued to work in the court, one of the judges has "retired" but still works and his wife, because of his position, has escalated the job ladder all the way to the top, becoming an administrator; this situation often causes conflict of interest as many attorneys, and other professionals who have conflicts with an administrative decision, can't go to the administrator for fear of upsetting her husband, the judge. When laying off people, to cut down costs, often single parents or other single income employees, many have been let go just because this arrogant woman dislikes them, all the while these three couples continue to draw huge salaries from our hard earned tax dollars.

PED2, Indio, CA (Sent Oct 5, 2010 12:07:07 PM)

My brother-in-law worked 35 years as a fireman. He retired and worked for a company that had no employee benefits. As firemen in the state he retired he was taken off of his medical benefits at age 65. If you choose to keep it it would cost 545.00 a month. Luckily he had worked before becoming a fireman and after retiring. He was eligible for social security. This was reduced by 2/3 called WEP. He was a city worker. He could not draw what he paid into social security. He did get medical care on Medicare having to pay for a supplement that cost 280.00 a month. He draws around 24000 a year retirement. They get no cost of living raises ever. He did cash in vacation. You have to remember this is a person who never took any vacation or sick leave. So he sacrificed time off with his family to continue to work.

(Sent Oct 5, 2010 12:06:25 PM)

I like it when they say they have to pay, however when it comes to my Mom's retirement from GM all they have to do is file for bankruptcy, and that's it all gone, almost everything she worked her whole life for. So all the cities have to do is file for bankruptcy problem solved.

Don Horsley Cocoa, Florida (Sent Oct 5, 2010 12:05:48 PM)

We need to look at the US Congress and find out what they really make beyond visible salaries. Maybe we need to boycott all professional sports, after all they are only playing a game and making 20 million (not all of course) and all of us are paying for it through products they advertise, think about it.

H. Leo Evans (Sent Oct 5, 2010 12:05:07 PM)

I remember when the police and firefighters were heroes (9/11). Now they are scapegoats. Government employees are the people who provide our services. They are not the enemy. We are going down a slippery slope with this line of thinking.

Anita in the Heartland (Sent Oct 5, 2010 12:02:06 PM)

Check out the DROP program in Philadelphia, originally designed to keep experienced workers on the job a few extra years by making additional payments to a separate pension account that they collect when they do retire. Elected officials decided they should get in on it, and additionally, many of these workers "retire" from their city jobs, collect several hundred thousand in DROP funds, then are given the same job back, often at higher pay, as a "consultant" or independent contractor."

Nancy Philadelphia (Sent Oct 5, 2010 12:01:52 PM)

Sounds like Hannibal

Greg Lewis, Missouri (Sent Oct 5, 2010 12:01:23 PM)

Why should state and local government employees get paid their sick leave---federal govt employees don't get the cash, but do get a maximum of one year unused sick leave added to their years of service when calculating retirement. Obviously, state and local governments, and school systems, are out of control. It is time for citizens to rise up and take back these ill-gotten gains by those who have immorally, if not illegally exploited the system. Taxpayer Revolution. Maybe off with their heads???? I know corruption--I'm from Chicago/Illinois!!!

Justice Reaper, Chicago, Illinois (Sent Oct 5, 2010 12:01:13 PM)

Nobody asked the government to create the currency or circulation of money that includes the money which we value which has a tax payable to the government, by this the government has formed an individual relation with everybody in the world who makes the value which has a tax payable to the government which the government supplies the people if are the one's maintaining the circulation, senate, congress, law enforcement, governors, presidents, they started this currency circulation, the people do make the money in order to have their needs but because these people of government chose for them too, their reasoning is that we as people did make that money which they supply us with to make for our needs, they also know to keep the money afloat people need to be corrected according to them when these same people they're correcting did not ask the government to create this value which has a tax payable to this same government in order for the people to have their needs and things, the government chooses that for the people & I guess it has to be because of this they are able to correct people. which means they need to get paid in order for people to have their own needs and things, they're not bigger than the money in the government's eyes if they know about the starving and the fact that they created something to where the people need them around in order for the people to have their resources and needs, sure they do make the money which the government 'maintains' but they did not tell the government to do this or make it this way if by them agreeing to follow along with the tax than that's mistaken, they only have to and see that they can put things together with it and get what they need using it but aren't enforcing this and on top of it knows that gives them some right to correct people for other things. It's as if once in the role they have a double life. they need it because they say so once in these roles, not just because their a person who needs money for their needs but making the people make the money for them or in other words in order for people to have their needs

on their planet they need to give something to the government just to have them. so when the individual does make this money which has a tax, like in a store or wherever they're paying this government and the government is than using that money to reinvest or give back some way but thing is nobody asked the government to maintain this circulation or currency that has a tax for them and in order for the people to have their things and needs they need the government because the government says they have too if the tax is on everything the people need and comes with the money, with that tax they pay for war, their peers to be corrected by the government , roads (which the ppl build btw the gov only pays) so this way in order for the people to have their needs and things, they need the government but it's the government who made it this way, the people only follow the government rules because they have too. so i see the government upholders know theyre getting something out of this, they know that people have to follow their rules and the people can't stop them or the people can do nothing about it, they have to follow these government peoples rules/laws because the government people say they do. so i'm getting the people need me to have their needs and i need to be in their life becaues i say so , is what i get from these 'government rulers' it makes them cool in their minds! the people need them and they know better than the people if the people think they do not need them. some babybays always do this crap in these type of worlds, they go right for some made up 'control' but its same , figured some way to build a relation in order for the people to have their things and they have to correct them if they don't pay them for their needs for example, judge whatever yeah he the boss, thing sorta happens oh the government , yeah theyre big (knows about the taxing and money circulation gov responsible for already) they say i can do this to people , than theyre right! thats what must make them right, the taxing! i'm the man now is what happens.

Gregory Smith, newyork, new york (Sent Oct 5, 2010 12:00:41 PM)

This is what happens when people turn blind eyes. Local government is just as important as national. In face local governments have more power than national. Until people take as much interests in the local works this will continue. Start now by going to and getting involved in local meetings and government. In our town these meetings are aired on the radio. LISTEN! And then VOTE in every election even in the local utility, etc matters.

Pamela Orr, Two Rivers, Alaska (Sent Oct 5, 2010 12:00:12 PM)

I don't begrudge some of these people. Many of them did the time, according to their contract, and are now collecting what they expected to collect. Some of them, like the absentee employee for 12 years,are ridiculous. State Police do very well when they usually retire at 55 and so do school teachers. it's not just "government" workers.

beverly McMinn (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:58:10 AM)

I lost my job as a licensed aircraft technician when PAN AM went out of business and with 24 years of service the Government Pension Guaranty Fund provides me with a monthly check for \$229. This does not cover my monthly electric bill. Guess I took the wrong path in life, should have been a bureaucrat.

Carl Pascual, Miami, Florida (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:56:42 AM)

This is called fraud. It happens in many places. Stop fraud. As for government employees rolling in dough, I doubt it. I chose a position the corporate world because government positions did not pay enough. I thought about teaching when I thought I wanted to leave corporate but I would have to be hired as the principal in order to meet my current salary. I work in the financial sector and my salary is within the norm.

Anita in the Heartland (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:55:46 AM)

People in America are so blind its pitiful. Yes a gov't worker getting paid 300k plus is outrageous, but what about the CEO's walking away with double to triple digit million dollar golden parachutes. I'm sure many would give up their pensions for a double digit million dollar payout. Do you think these people on top of companies really pay taxes? They know loop holes, and ways to get around paying taxes. Go google how millionaire/billionare families in manhattan have tax payers paying for their kids schools. WAKE UP AMERICA!!!! Its a few gov't workers and plenty of private corporation managers who are causing the recession. Think of who funds these politicians. These politicians

wont bite the hands that feeds them, so their turned into scapegoats. People are so blinded by this kind of news bashing on the middle class gov't workers that their not seeing the bigger picture. The people on top are turning us against each other. I'll gladly pay the firefighter 100k plus to run into a burning building to save me, the cop to make my neighborhood safe for me and my family, the sanitation to keep my neighborhood clean, but I sure as hell dont want to pay 800k for a corrupt politician playing golf with other millionares who got back everything they paid in taxes.

Eddie, Brooklyn (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:54:47 AM)

The Federal Government should not bail these state governments out. The voters put these people in charge(who were not fiscally responsible) to run their Government, now they should suffer the consequences.

Bob Jones (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:54:46 AM)

I wonder how many of these are political appointed positions? I'm willing to bet most are. These are not "regular" public employees. Once again the big boys have rigged the system to benefit them.

Max - Kansas (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:54:06 AM)

In the land of downfall, corruption is always rampant

sam (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:52:03 AM)

This is bordering on outright theft. I know money eases a lot of pain, but with the economic situation in the world today, how can these people live with themselves. This double and triple dipping needs to be stopped immediatly. Of course I know this will never happen, this is government and they live by different rules than the rest of us.

Fishy Digit, North Bend, WA (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:51:26 AM)

I find it interesting that the article here doesn't seem to address the role that the union contracts play here. City, state and federal workers are much more likely to be covered by public worker unions and I suspect that many of the employees listed here are simply the ones who have figured out how to maximize their negotiated union contracts. It is simply common sense that there will always be inefficiencies in large organizations, and the larger the organization, the more likely the inefficiencies will grow with it. Obviously governments play a significant role here and need to be held accountable, but they are far from being the only responsible party here. Let's not look past the fact that the contracts that most of these workers are using were negotiated by the employee unions, and all you have to do is look at Chrysler and GM to see what union contracts do when their larger than life employment guarantees, salary levels, pension and other employment agreements come to bear. There are positive results from unions such as employee protections, collective bargaining etc, but at the same time, the union processes are just as prone to the abusive practices as the entities that employ them, so let's be honest and spread the responsibility around a bit... The people taking the inflated pay packages have just as much of a responsibility to 'do the right thing' as the employers here. I can't envision a scenario where some mayor held a gun to a city manager's head to get him/her to accept hundreds of hours of payout on unused sick/vacation time -that's just a union perk....

Jason P, Bellevue, WA (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:50:13 AM)

Here's another interesting loophole. I work for county government. Many employees here are considered exempt, meaning as long as they work 4 hours per day, they will get paid for 8 hours without using any sick time or vacation time. So, when it comes time for retirement, guess who has thousands of banked sick & vacation time hours that will be paid as a lump sum? I haven't seen this exposed yet, but it's about time. By the way, most of the county employees I work with are hard working individuals. It's these arrogant politicians that give us all a bad rap.

Disgusted Too, Cincinnati, OH (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:50:01 AM)

UNBELIEVABLE. Private-sector corporations continue to shed jobs of actual working people in order to protect multi-million dollar executive compensation packages, but we should be concerned about a few public employees making a few hundred thousand dollars? Seriously?

You are being fatally abused, America, but it's not by these public employees.
Frank Stoner, Madison, WI (Sent Oct 5, 2010 10:35)

You must be a government employee Frank or a total stoner.

Tom Webb (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:49:31 AM)

My home taxes have doubled in 10 years. My state taxes have increased with little to none going to my town! I'm tired of it, if I don't pay....I'll be out in the street! Time to send a message.....let these towns/cities go bankrupt! let the pensions go bust! Sorry, my pension was stopped and now I need to live on a 401k! Meanwhile I am paying for pensions with my tax dollars that weren't earned! State workers are making what I am making or even more with a pension and medical benefits! How do we pay for it.....raise taxes, fees, etc.....it cannot keep going this way!

Vic, CT (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:49:15 AM)

We as taxpayers need to revolt and stop this now!!! we need to take back the pensions and establish something normal. I for one could care less if I take a state employees pension and reduce it by 30+%. they are milking the system and its a joke. we wonder why schools dont have money? just look at the pensions and obligations we are forced to pay for and that is why I will never vote for increased funding to schools...i do not trust the people in charge and will not give them more moeny to screw up.

Brian Colclough, Rancho Santa Margarita, CA (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:46:58 AM)

Sick time and vacation buyouts are a problem but be aware that not ALL government bodies offer them for exactly the reasons pointed out in this article. Under the Freedom of Information Act you have the right to request salary information and employment contracts in your community. If what you find is unacceptable contact your representative(s). You have the right to do that. But I think you will find that, by and large, the examples in this article are extreme and are not representative of a majority of the government workforce.

I do not make anywhere near six figures working in the public sector. I wonder what I would make in the private sector? Pensions used to be the great equalizer between the public and private sectors but that's not the case anymore. What I'd like to see is an article comparing the public and private sector salaries for folks doing similar work with the same education and years on the job. I suspect you will find a huge disparity.

Let's compare apples to apples and resist the temptation to assume that "government has absolutely run wild at the expense of the taxpayer." I have a masters degree, 11 years of experience and make \$63,000 - no raise for 2 years and furloughs last year resulting in a pay cut. 15% of our staff was cut and we've all taken on more work. No raise in taxes. We're not martyrs but we're also not "running wild" and scamming the system as some have claimed. DO NOT lump all "government workers" into one category. It's as misleading as saying everyone in the private sector is an "overpaid executive."

Marie, Chicago, IL (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:45:57 AM)

The situation at the state and local level is out of control and as taxpayers we are doing nothing about it except rant at the federal Government. State and Local taxes have a greater iimpact on most of us than the federal. The entire increase in taxes nationally has come from state and local government. We are over policed, over regulated and we are going downhill fast. The Federal government bailing out the states and local government is not the answer. STOP raising taxes and figure out how to cut whatever needs to be cut so that at the end of the day normal people can still afford to take care of their families. if we don't lower the overall tax burden on Americans in general, we are inviting an even bigger disaster than we have been having the last couple of years. Cut the civil service and bring our military home to our shores

seymour ravinsky (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:45:30 AM)

Most of these examples listed are outrageous, but to complain about the salaries and benefits of all public sector workers is a bit extreme. I am a federal employee and yes I enjoy an excellent benefits package but my slary is considerably less than what I would make as a private sector employee. There is waste and abuse but it is almost

always at the higher levels. Those of us in the rank and file work very hard to provide a service to our fellow citizens and we continue to get complaints about the sizes of our salaries and the types of benefits we receive.

Rose Denver CO (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:44:27 AM)

The real scandal here is the reporter himself. He wants the American workers to fight among each other. Rather than attacking those who serve us, many in dangerous professions, we should be working together for a better standard of living for ALL Americans. Yes the standard of living has greatly decreased for private sector Americans. Meanwhile compensation for CEOs had increased hundreds of times more than their average employee. What do they do to earn that type of compensation? They run once great iconic American companies into the ground and ship American jobs out of our country. The only way to resolve this is for American workers to act together. I know the last 30 years or so have turned the word union into a bad thing. Call it what you want, we must work together. Most of these government employees you are talking about are not represented by organized labor. They negotiate through city or county councils. We must rebuild organized labor in all sectors of America, private as well as government employees. Thank you.

M. Hess (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:43:28 AM)

I sure am glad that you decided to follow up your article from September 24th with this inflammatory piece of sensationalism. Your article sets a tone that all government employees, especially city managers, are over paid and under worked. You offer none of the examples I sent in response to your last article. These examples showed that not all salaries and benefits are not excessive. You fail to discuss the reason why some of these salaries are so large. You barely mention that it costs more to live in most of the cities where the salaries are "excessive." This sets the base salary higher to begin with.

I do not disagree that the examples you have provided are clearly excessive compensation packages. In many cases the employees are taking advantage of the system and this should be corrected. However, you fail to counter the bad examples with any good examples. But that would mean provide an intelligent debate of the issue, and, of course, that means not getting the hyped responses that proves to your editors that anybody actually reads your column.

Perhaps you will consider writing an article that provides a balanced look, but I will not expect anything more than the dog and pony show you have been providing.

Cole, Algona, IA (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:42:37 AM)

Teachers, police, school and town administrators, state and federal workers salaries and benefits must match the private sector. Put all these folks on 401ks. Business did that 25 years ago. No guaranteed or automatic raises. The growing cost of government at all levels will be the key issue for the next 25 years. This is bigger than Obama and Bush. We must reign in these costs!!!

Gary Chicago, IL (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:42:14 AM)

It seems to me that most of the people who defend this massive waste of public tax dollars probably work for the state or fed. They complain that the private sector CEO's make way more (and I agree) but the difference is that were talking about TAX dollars!

Somehow it is justified that a cop or a fireman can make more in pension than their actual salary just because they have taken a job that they know they are putting themselves in harms way? Sorry I don't buy that. They know the risk. Most of us make 40-50% in retirement (30+) years. while many of them retire and get a pension @ 80-90% and then just go back to the same trough for another pension. It is very clear why the states are broke. It is time for major public pay and pension reform and time to crush these unions out of existence

Jim H, Santa Ana, CA (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:40:34 AM)

Is it just a sad commentary that people who defend these public salaries actually believe in what they say. Instead of looking at themselves in the mirrors and seeing they are the problem, they hide like lazy dogs and try to say its "millionaire executives" who they forget pay taxes they are leeching off of.

In NYS, these same people who collect state pensions pay no state income tax, instead they collect their six figure pension, worth double that when you consider all the free health care they receive for the rest of their lives and move

to a southern state because their NYS taxes are too high. Yet, they refuse to admit one of the reasons for the high taxes is because of their fat salaries, pensions and benefits bankrupting the states but god forbid they pay state income tax like all of us do.

Continue bashing people in private sector who some work 50,60,70 hours a week. You are the crooks of america. You are so blind and ignorant. You want to say people in private make so much money? Well lets see, say you work 25 years. Now add up your salary, sick pay, vacation pay, medical benefits for you and whoever is on your plan, then your pension, and tax breaks for getting a state pension. Now take that number and see how much money you have made and divide that by the 25 yrs you worked, and trust me, worked is being used loosely. Don't forget to add 10-15 years towards the end of your life, because we know there isn't that much stress when you working in government jobs.

Tired Independent, NYC, NY (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:34:03 AM)

You think this is bad, someone ought to investigate the federal government(congress), military, dept of energy as well as state owned colleges.....it gets even worse and thay all have one common denominator "government employees" you would be surprised by all the double dipping going on in the public sector.....accumulating sick days is common at all levels of government, local, municipality, stat and federal levels.....

DaeCopeland, Knoxville, Tn (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:33:34 AM)

Want to make six-figures in the onset of your career? Become a police officer in northern New Jersey where the cops are the HIGHEST paid in the country. A rookie cop with an initial salary of nearly \$60k will also receive two raises this year. They are in increments of \$10k every six months - totaling \$80k. After overtime, the total will be \$90k in the FIRST year!

Marcus, Bergen County, NJ (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:32:30 AM)

Of course there is a lot of corruption going on in government and it is based on politics. The regular "government worker" is not to be included in this accusatory crap. And that is the majority of what works in government. Hard working people that pay into retirement with their own money. Nothing is given to them. Be real... all these people that are writing this crap do not know what they are talking about. They are just jumping on the bandwagon without knowing or researching the truth about all of this. It IS a fact that america has become corrupt and ridiculous in what it pays some of the people, but government is only a small part of it. There are athletes that get paid millions for a sport - what asinine thing is this - and there are CEOs that get paid millions and millions of dollars without benefitting anyone.... AND yes there are the people in a lot of the key positions in government that have gotten there not because they worked hard and deserved it... they KNOW someone and that is why they got appointed. It is all a very, very sick society. But to place all this blame on government workers is the utmost asinine article I have ever read. The writer of this article probably makes a few hundred thousand dollars a year if not more. And yes, just look at the high paid Media People on TV etc - look at their salaries. Why can't people be real about this and honest. It is a conglomeration of all these highpaid people... Who in the hell needs millions of dollars to live on... it is absurd and perverted, but it will not change because the public does watch these news shows, does go to the sports events etc. etc . etc. If the common population wold not support all of this crap, these people would not be paid these salaries. Its as simple as that.

Just stop blaming the common government worker for this crap that is going on in politics. Get a grip people and grow up.

Maria C, Baltimore, MD (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:30:29 AM)

Sounds like one long diatribe of sour grapes. Public employees' pensions are set by state laws. If you don't like the law, then change it. Otherwise STFU. These pensions, by virtue of their legal status, are binding contracts. You cannot fault or blame the people that are receiving them. Like I said, if you didn't realize this when you started your career and worked in the private sector,guess what? You got screwed. Stop complaining about those that dedicated their lives to public service.

Dan Halen, Douglas County, GA (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:30:09 AM)

This behavior is dissgusting to the integrity of the average hard working citizen who has been let down by the goverment who are supposed to protect & serve.We are overworked over taxed and loosing all that we have because

the system just does not work and never will until we STOP outsourcing this country and keeping us in debt forever. Apparently our elected DUMMIES forget that the only way to prosper is to be a STRONG INDUSTRIALIZED NATION. Who in their right mind would buy even a radio made in JAPAN in all the years before the 60's-70's But if we do not get our country in the right tract by education and industry we are destined to fail. And those who represent us only care about their pocketsk. hey politicians when the hell is "BY THE PEOPLE AND FOR THE PEOPLE' Going to mean something to you DUMMIES.

DR.BEN DOVER (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:30:07 AM)

Tea anyone??

SteveJJ (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:29:44 AM)

Yes, lets look at the salary of the person that wrote this article. I bet you he makes well over \$100,000 and thinks he's worth every penny of it. I'm a firefighter in Illinois. I got 2 hours sleep during our last 24 hr shift and that isn't unusual. Our sleep cycles are chronically messed up - even with the 24 on 48 off schedule. Our other crew had to wash the guts off the pavement of a car wreck fatality. Where were most of you private sectors when we were up serving our community? Probably whining about how "bad" you've got it. Funny, when you were getting bonuses, 401k matches, and large salaries when things were good you thought we were fools for choosing steady work. I made my career decsion and so did you. Good luck to you but don't criticize me. We deserve more respect than this if for nothing else than the carnage we see on a regular basis.

John, Somewhere, Illinois (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:29:18 AM)

Ahhh! Democracy and Capitalism at its finest!!!

For every person who put up a negative comment I'm sure that two of you would take the job, money and anything that came with it without complaining....

Now I'm hearing the Tea baggers screaming at how its the Dems fault for all of these "fiascos"... And to think that most of the time, we voted for all of these bozos...

Mark, NY, NY (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:29:07 AM)

Well, if it makes you all feel any better, in CA. the governor has put state employees on furlough 3 days per month (15%) pay cut. I am a Fresno County employee, and my health insurance premium payment is \$866.66 per month. This doesn't include co-pays. And it ticks me off that the CAO of our podunk county makes \$185K annually. For what?

Lori Fleenor, Fresno, CA (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:28:43 AM)

school systems through out this state are raising taxes above what is called the proposition 2 1/2 just to raise 500k for kids to play sports on a basis where they are already \$250 per student to participate in those programs whether that be track or football or basketball, and the average teachers salary is 75k with several school systems not even being certified schools. and then when they pass the over rides the municipalities throw in pay raises to the police and fire depts when a average sargeants salary with sick time and 3 day a month off are making 125k and with overtime 175 k. something is wrong in mass. and it isn't rotting cheese its the public employees gas from being bloated

mike defeudis, holliston, ma (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:27:53 AM)

Missing from this report was the vaunted Mayor of Rochester, NY and candidate for Lieutenant Governor of NY. He draws a salary of \$127,694 as mayor and a pension of \$70,000 from his police days. Not only that but he didn't take a leave of absence from his mayor job so he is getting paid by the people of Rochester, NY to campaign for Lt.Governor while neglecting his Mayoral duties. Nice, huh? In the meantime the City of Rochester could use some financial help in schools, Police department, Fire department, etc... The best part is, NO ONE says a thing about it. The local paper is so scared of this guy they don't dare print a negative story on him. Simply incredible. I'm sure if he gets elected to Lt. Governor he'll arrange some way to keep his pension, mayor salary and the salary he'll earn as Lt. Governor!

Dennis O'Fletcher (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:27:09 AM)

It like the republican party is going to protect you from the crooks, when all them are crooks. President Bush protected the Banks with TARP not President Obama, the only thing President Obama did was save the Auto industry from going under. But you have the republican party out there saying be saved the Banks.

Edward G., Milwaukee, WI . (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:26:02 AM)

Gee do you think we could find out what staff makes for congress and the senators and what there paid...What does it cost the taxpayers to pay for an office....hmmm bet there just as bad...lot of sweet deals.

russell Fox wells, me (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:24:59 AM)

They love to point at government workers, but no one has looked at private sector "not for profit" businesses that take very large amounts of government money and give executives nice fat salaries, paying the mortgages on their mini mansions, the same sweetheart car lease deals except the CEOs get a new car every year.

Rarely does the taxpayer end up saving money or getting better services.

Any government type facility that can be "outsourced" suffers the same sort of extremely high salaries for executives and they use government money to get them.

The most common place for this to happen are local "not for profit" hospitals. Rather than the government open a public hospital, the not for profits are given large sums of money, every year, from the local city or county. Plus they usually pick up state money as well.

It's not uncommon for the CEOs to take 7 figure salaries, even in small localities, while the doctors, nurses and other medical professionals see lowered salaries. Other scams like "outsourcing" jobs and then requiring the staff to "reapply" for their old jobs with the "outsourced" companies is common as well.

And it's not just hospitals. Public libraries are seeing the same sort of thing happen. Companies that are owned by private investors are taking over the running of public libraries, but because they are privately held, it's next to impossible to tell who is an investor in them. Including your own elected official who have voted to outsource the running of these department.

Or Departments of Vocational Rehabilitation. The work is outsourced, but it is rare that the department ever works as well as it did when it was part of government.

If you think paying government officials these large salaries "directly" is a problem, the "indirect" method of ripping off the taxpayer is even more egregious.

When a politician suggests that "outsourcing" jobs is the answer to keeping taxes low, be wary. The private companies the departments are outsourced to may keep costs lower the first year or two, then they will rise and keep rising to degrees that far exceed anything the government would charge. And the way that these companies that government outsources to are set up, it is almost impossible to find out if the politicians who are voting for the outsourcing are investors or owners in the companies they are voting to outsource the government work to. That is you know how much these people mentioned above are making. With the new type of outsourcing, you will never know how much the investors in the companies are earning as a result of reducing the levels of services the taxpaying public gets.

This is because the latest scam is for "hedge funds" to set up these sort of businesses that offer to take over government departments. Because hedge funds are under no obligation to allow anyone to know who owns them or who is investing in them, it's impossible to tell if the taxpayer is slowly being given lower services and paying more for the privilege.

NJ (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:24:46 AM)

I work for a municipality in WNY state. I've been there 15 years, and earning every bit of my \$32,000 as the bookkeeper. It is beyond belief, beyond disgusting that these high priced salried employees get away with payroll theft...because that is just what it is. It's so unbelievable that...I just don't have the words for it

Bookkeeper, Western NY (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:24:12 AM)

This is why people are losing their homes. The property taxes are too high and there is no cap on what can be charge each year. Here in Deerpark, NY there was a 125% increase. Many people here are asking why, in fact so many people that the City of Port Jervis and Town of Deerpark STOP people from talking at town meeting and if you try to talk they have stated you will be ARRESTED! They have gone as far as making false charges on people who are talking out on local TV and "unbelievable", but also on the internet blogs too..

Robert (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:23:35 AM)

You need to sell your cities and give it to the unions!! Ask what your country can do for you!

SteveJJ (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:22:18 AM)

Fred, maybe you don't understand who pays for government salaries. It's TAXPAYERS. Capitalism allows people to reap the rewards of making it in business. You're comparing apples and oranges.

John, Kansas City, MO (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:21:58 AM)

I tell my two boys 12 and 10 years old the american dream use to be owning your own business now it's working for the city, state, or fed. gov.

john (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:20:21 AM)

This can't be a big surprise folks.This is the age of Alfred E. Neumann, everyone seems to have that "who cares, what me worry?" attitude. The situation got this way after years of people looking the other way.

Bob Kullman , West Chester, Pa. (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:20:03 AM)

I wonder how many state and local government money problems can be attributed to these types of abuses?

We have seen the enemy
and it is OUR government

Leo, Chicago Il. (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:19:56 AM)

It is amazing to see how many people still defend these exceptional super-sized pay. My only conclusion is " Every county, state and country deserve the leaders they have."

Vicki, Bethesda, MD (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:19:15 AM)

Notice that these are all state and local govt workers. NOT FEDERAL WORKERS! Fedal pay has been attempting to catch up with the private sector for years. For example, engineers who design huge dams and have 30 years experience and who consult to countries all over the world make about \$115,000 while consultants in the private sector make twice to three times that amount. This "government employee" is so deceptive and only enflames the country into thinking "all govt" workers make these figures. NOT true. Misleading people into this thinking is inflammatory and dangerous. Fed salaries are set and most are fair or lower than the private sector. As for state and local - that's a different story.

j d, Seattle, Wash (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:18:45 AM)

I wrote about this in the Newsvine, about accountable government spending.It starts at the top and thats with the President of our U.S. He has to set the example and CHANGE the way government officials are being paid by our tax dollars and be held accountable by the people of the U.S. REMEMBER WE THE PEOPLE ELECTED HIM BECAUSE OF THE WORD CHANGE. We want positive Change.Can he or will he do it is the question? If not someone has to step up to the plate and do whats RIGHT for the American People. Who can we TRUST? VERY GOOD QUESTION? So many lies and crooks in our government now.

Rocky Life, Orlando, Fl. (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:18:15 AM)

Your review missed the abuses in Wisconsin. My property tax bill on a modest home in Milwaukee is over \$5000 due in large part to an unsustainable pension and retiree health care plan and double-dippers. This will ultimately bankrupt the city. I was amused by the comments of Frank Stoner from Madison, WI who is likely an overpaid civil servant himself.

Fred, Milwaukee, WI (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:14:25 AM)

You should check out the current Derry Township School Board Superintendent in Hershey, Pennsylvania (Dr. Linda Brewer) who is scheduled to retire and return as a consultant.

Jonathan Keeler, Hershey, Pennsylvania (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:12:32 AM)

Then people wonder why there is no money for the services we need, like child protective services and mental health services. If we fire most of the unneeded senior and mid-level management we could save so many jobs for the lower wage earners and be able to keep up with the demand for these services. You know the old saying any time something is top heavy its only a matter of time before it will fall over.

Michelle, Victorville, Ca (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:11:31 AM)

It is 10:35am in Madison, WI and Stoner is already stoned. If he gets a moment of lucidity he may want to examine just what it is that public sector workers produce, what portion of the gross domestic product can be accredited to them, and could the economy get along without them. Maybe a few months of rehab and an honest job in the private sector will help this fool see the light. Finally, and of equal importance, the USSR experimented for 70 years with a 100% public sector workforce (Obama's goal) and it was a miserable failure. Mmm, Mmm, Mmm

beijingbob, Kennewick, wa (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:11:25 AM)

Most of these "salaries" include big overtime. It is up to the municipalities to reign in the overtime budgets. These are very small percentages of government workers but you are all quick to condemn every public employee. Many people in this country choose to work after they retire and quite often the new job they take offers benefits and they are given these jobs because of their sometimes unique skillsets. I agree there are definitely creeps out there who more than take advantage of the loop holes but please stop blaming every public employee, some of whom put their lives on the line for the public that now thinks they are crooks.

Mike, Sylvania, OH (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:11:22 AM)

Look at Goliath Davis retired police chief in St. Petersburg, FL who retired in excess of 100,000.00 and has worked for more than eight years as deputy mayor and now a liaison for the mayor with a six figure salary. Who knows what he does except get paid, St. Pete is no better off, city employees laid off, funding for poor families rehab of homes funding has been cut, slow services in other areas.

ronald wade (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:11:06 AM)

bring home the troops now. We lost moral justification for fighting the foreign wars. Corporate and government corruptions are destroying this nation. Deploy troops at home, marshall law, public execution for white-collar criminals.

JaneDoe, Seattle, Wash (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:10:21 AM)

One thing we all need to keep in mind when spewing ilk trying to compare a CIVIL SERVANT position to PRIVATE SECTOR CEOs etc, is that these CIVIL SERVANTS get paid with OUR TAX DOLLARS where the CEOs get paid by with the money MADE BY THEIR RESPECTIVE COMPANIES!! If a company makes enough, and VOTES to give them outrageous sums of compensation, that's their business and our GOVERNMENT SHOULD NOT HELP THEM IF THEY MAKE FINANCIAL BLUNDERS. I don't know about the rest of you but when I find out that someone that is living from MY tax dollars is making THREE TIMES AS MUCH AS I DO for the SAME TYPE OF WORK, it sort of ticks me off! It is very well documented that, across the board, Government pay is two to three times higher than an equivalent private sector job. Why? Because if they want more money, they just create more taxes that the REST of us pay. Time to review and revamp our entire government and judicial system if you ask me.

Tim, Houston, Texas (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:08:42 AM)

When it's not their own money, people don't care. Government needs to shrink drastically

Sean, Detroit MI (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:07:40 AM)

People like this has the nerve to go to church and be good christians? Too much greed.....

John, Plantation Florida (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:07:30 AM)

Someone should check out Blythe, CA as well. City employees are making well over \$150k/year including benefits, and the average income in the town of 15,000 is far below that of most other cities in California. Robbing the many to pay for the few.

Nick - Blythe, CA (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:07:11 AM)

la corrupcion no se ve a bajos niveles como en latino america, aqui se ve a grandes niveles,,,,y tarde que temprano eso mata,,,,en fin todos se cubren con la misma cobiga,,,los que legislan aprueban esos salarios para cuando ellos suban de puesto o se retiren tambien puedan adquirir esos beneficios,,,,sorry i can t written in english

eduardo ruiz (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:06:57 AM)

not sure how much this happens here in Michigan, but the government employees I know of don't make anywhere near the numbers they are rattling off. must be at the higher levels. But one thing I do know for sure is that police officers here do well enough, that when I get phones calls soliciting donations for them (because they seem to think they don't get paid enough for their hard work) I hang up on them. I know for a fact they are making a lot more money than my husband who is doing much more dangerous work.

kayway, upnorth, MI (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:06:38 AM)

our "Heroes" are ruining us

John Doe, Seattle, Wash (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:05:06 AM)

The fact that many on this board compare the salaries of "bankers, lawyers and executives" to the salaries of public servants, shows a clear towing of the union line. Here is the difference for those pro union, anti business people who post here. Private companies are not tax payer supported. That means that all of us, do not unwillingly pay the salaries of the bankers lawyers and executives. The entire concept of free enterprise is to create opportunity and create shareholder wealth. Without that, there is no school system, no fire department, no police department. Try running your town/city/county with only schools, police and fire departments, and no businesses or people working in the private sector. Public jobs rely on successful businesses for their tax revenue. Public jobs are not self sustaining. The union line of comparing public sector jobs to private is something that has been happening since the inception of the unions. As far as danger, and life threatening job duties, well, there are many private sector jobs that are many times more dangerous than being a firefighter or police officer in a city with almost no crime, and no fatal fires in 50 years. You get paid every week for the risk you endure. Try being an oil rig worker, Iron worker or late night clerk in a 7/11 in the ghettos of Chicago. Those are dangerous jobs, that do not guaranty payments for life after you stop contributing to the organization.

R Meehan (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:04:52 AM)

Just think, Government employees get twice the vacation, huge pensions, twice the benefits, what a life? They are living large while the private sector employees absolutely work their butts off. This is an outrage!!!

Bob , Chicago, IL. (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:04:49 AM)

There are unreasonable salaries and benefits in all sectors. But remember, it's generally not tax payers who fund the private sector -- it's the companies' customers (bailouts and government contractors being a special case). In all cases for public employees, it's taxpayer money that is being wasted on these obscene salaries and benefits. Customers generally have a choice -- taxpayers do not -- they are simply taxed.

Tony Thomas (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:04:43 AM)

Anyone who doesn't think this is disgusting is working for the government. In addition to these salaries are the health care benefits, sick days, vacation days, pensions and more that non gov workers don't get. It used to be if you worked for the gov your non gov counterpart made more but you killed them in benefits. Now gov workers make have larger to grossly larger salaries and guess what, they don't mind. The gov wants to deny my social security to pay gov pensions while killing my stock market investments at the same time. WTF!!!

greg, tampa, florida (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:03:59 AM)

Well I'm glad msnbc at least acknowledges this now that the right has been yelling about it for years. The problem is, they didn't link that thought with those in Washington saying they need more \$\$ in taxes and those evil Republicans are standing in the way. At some point, Washington has made enough \$\$ and the citizens should be able to keep what they earn rather than hand it over to a wasteful organization.

Allen, Dallas, TX (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:03:41 AM)

Double dipping happens in Tampa Bay all the time. People get scorned(in the press) but never truly punished.

Jason, Holiday, FL (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:03:14 AM)

Thats why Obama wants the Bush tax cuts to expire, so we can tax all of there greedy asses.

Kue,Dallas,Tx (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:02:41 AM)

I see people comparing corporate salaries to government salaries. I do not get taxed to pay for corporate salaries, and that is the core issue here. If Steve Jobs is making \$1B /year, thats because we support his company, of our own free will.

When's the last time you got to vote on salary caps for your government officials? It's your money, shouldn't you have a say?

TJ (Sent Oct 5, 2010 11:00:11 AM)

come one people you put this people in office it's your own fault for not going to town meetings so stop blaming everyone else I know it's the way we do things here in the US. But it's time for the people to take blame. All I hear is people crying in here why can't some one give me a car or pick up my bills. Maybe if you didn't live out of your means and stop trying to buy a house that is 600,000 dollars and all you make is 30,000 a year it's your on fault for getting your self into debt. I work my ass off and make 45,000 a year and I'm a fire fighter. I don't blame anyone for the bills I have but myself. I paid for the stuff I own I have no credit cars I don't live out side of my means. I write down the bills I have then pay them with my pay check. Whats ever left over then that's my play money. Or I can pay down my debt faster wow that's crazy that's not the way we do thinks here in the US we like are debt in fact look at the government.

you people are stupid (Sent Oct 5, 2010 10:59:20 AM)

The biggest problem that America faces is the feeling of entitlement, this is again proof our leaders being out of touch. For America to become strong again we must bring spending under control in government and cut taxes for the middle class. Maybe then the engine that drives America will be restarted!

[Chad Vogel, Madison WI](#) (Sent Oct 5, 2010 10:58:24 AM)

When the middle class workers in private sector struggle to survive,the government employees get chunk of our tax dollars. The Government employees should get the same benefits as private sector employees. Can we do that?

George S, Clifton, NJ (Sent Oct 5, 2010 10:58:24 AM)

Well good for them. Take the uneducated, uninvolved, nonvoting taxpayer and rob them for all they are worth. IF YOU DON'T GET INVOLVED you will pay for it in the end. It looks to be getting pretty close!

Mike Goike, Clarksville, Tennessee (Sent Oct 5, 2010 10:57:25 AM)

What you have here is private sector job holders who made great salaries that lost their job and now want to attack public servants for all the years of back breaking work they did to get good salaries. It's not the public servants fault you chose to pursue the private sector to make more money and then lost out. I say kudos to these public servants for what they do and they deserve more. Boo to these private sector folks who are angry the public servant now is doing better than them!

Dan D St. Louis (Sent Oct 5, 2010 10:57:25 AM)

Compounding the situation is the lack of work ethic. Government workers, as a whole, are lazy and unproductive. They can get away with it because nobody wants to rock the boat, as long as they let others get away with what they want to do, they can also get away with what they want. This isn't some myth or exaggeration, I see this from numerous people I know who are government workers. Some actually do freelance work on the clock as well.

Our federal, state, county and local government agencies are all having financial issues. How can that be? This is what happens when you combine incompetence, laziness and outright fraud into a single system with no outside accountability. I, for one, am outright angry that our government keeps increasing taxes and in return we get shit.

TJ (Sent Oct 5, 2010 10:54:52 AM)

On a smaller scale, look to smaller county governments. A small county (Dunn County) in Wisconsin recently had all of their social workers on a paid 2 day retreat, paid by taxpayers of course. And what did they do during this retreat? eat, read a book, play games, golf (fees also paid by taxpayers), and make a dream board (think back to Kindergarten). These same social workers are allowed to go to local coffee shops to "vent" about cases on paid work time as well, as often as they need to. What a waste of money for those taxpayers in Dunn County!

Sarah Doe, Altoona, Wisconsin (Sent Oct 5, 2010 10:53:49 AM)

Why keep on paying taxes to make these bastards rich.

They should BK the cities and start from scratch.

We are all mad and these SOB are having a great life on my hard work. F\$%^ these people.

Manuel Rivas, Los Angeles, CA (Sent Oct 5, 2010 10:53:44 AM)

What do we call someone who manages a multi-million dollar organization with hundreds or thousands of employees? If they are in the private sector they are called CEO's and they make a salary of over a million dollars and more in stock benefits. If they are in the government they are a City Manager or a County Administrator and we complain if they make over \$100,000. Get real! The corruption and double dipping should be prosecuted but it's time to acknowledge that our governments are large, complex organizations that need well educated and experienced specialists to manage them. Most of these City Managers could make much more in the private sector. These pension problems came about because too many elected officials gave away the store to unionized employees. It was easy and it wouldn't affect the budget until the elected officials were long gone. It's only natural that the heads of the organizations receive the same or better pensions than the rank and file workers. That's the way it is in the private sector as well.

David Morland, Stillwater, MN (Sent Oct 5, 2010 10:53:41 AM)

This bloated, disgusting waste of tax payer money must be stopped. There are plenty of unemployed qualified people who would do these jobs for significantly less than it is currently costing municipalities. The entire issue starts with and ends with the unions. it just does not make sense to pay someone for 20 or 30 years not to work. Municipalities need to follow basic business rules-paying people not to work is not sustainable. Take lessons from GM, Chrysler and the steel companies. Pensions are a thing of the past. You work, you get a check at the end of the week, there is no justification for a pension. Pensions do not exist in the private sector, they should not exist in the public sector.

R Meehan (Sent Oct 5, 2010 10:50:38 AM)

22 year Retired U.S. Marine...you don't want to know what I get in retired pay, you would get sick! Along with disability I still dont make enough to be on the same level as a typical welfare recipient. And then I see these guys

pulling down more money than 1 made in over 10 years yearly in retired pay yearly??? Nothing wrong with that picture now is there.....

Ben, Havelock NC (Sent Oct 5, 2010 10:50:06 AM)

Double dipping should be outlawed with a special nationwide law banning it outright. It's high time public officials stop padding their own retirements at the expense of the general public. This is not RUSSIA!!!

Vincent Wolf (Sent Oct 5, 2010 10:49:38 AM)

This is nothing to ignore and should be addressed accordingly, but in light of the more serious theft going on with Wall Street selling worthless paper and our government buying this crap in our name. Really...come on!!! This is a distraction to move our attention away from the serious changes that have to be made in this country. Consider that the bailout of Wall Street amounts to trillions of dollars of taxpayer money. Consider how much is being spent on irrelevant wars. When you look at it from that angle, what's going on with some government workers gaming the system is child's play. Keep your eye on the ball folks!!!!

Repug Nant (Sent Oct 5, 2010 10:47:38 AM)

Seems that there are no such things as morals and ethics anymore. It's more like "he's getting away with it, so there's nothing wrong if I get away with it, too!" This all makes me sick!

Beth, Madison, WI (Sent Oct 5, 2010 10:47:07 AM)

This kind of thing is happening everywhere. I live in a small town in the midwest where the top group of management of our local electric provider recently retired after 20 years service and was immediately rehired doing the same jobs but as consultants. This was approved by the electric board who is appointed by the city council yet was never announced to the public.

sam jackson (Sent Oct 5, 2010 10:46:18 AM)

It's interesting to read the comments of some of the public employees here. They complain about bankers, and others who actually add to Americas gross domestic product. Public employees DO NOT. They simply absorb tax dollars paid by those who do. This is absurd and Americas public employee unions are to blame. These unions must be controlled or they WILL break this countrys economic system.

Grab your Ankles Bend Oregon (Sent Oct 5, 2010 10:46:18 AM)

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