

***Federal Employees: A Valuable Asset, Not a Convenient Offset***

Wanted to be sure you saw this op-ed by Congressman Steny Hoyer in the *Federal Times* on the need to recognize the contribution that federal employees have already made toward deficit reduction as negotiations to prevent the fiscal cliff continue. To read the op-ed, click [here](#) or see below:

**Don't Throw Feds Over 'Cliff'**

*Federal Employees: A Valuable Asset, Not a Convenient Offset*

By: Rep. Steny Hoyer

With all eyes on Washington over how to avert the looming fiscal cliff before the end of the year, critics of the public sector have been arguing that pay and benefits for federal employees ought to be among the first and deepest cuts. Like a broken record, those who continually disparage the important role played by our public employees again and again ask those employees to contribute to deficit reduction without asking the same of other groups.

Already, federal employees and retirees have contributed \$15 billion in savings over 10 years through an increased pension contribution. A two-year pay freeze that has been in effect since 2011 will produce an additional \$60 billion in savings. And the reduction and delay of a 2013 pay increase included in the current continuing resolution will yield a further \$28 billion. That's \$103 billion in cuts to one group of middle-class workers.

Yet further cuts to federal employees' pay and benefits have been proposed to offset a number of pieces of legislation, including highway funding, a payroll tax holiday extension and student loan rate reductions.

Much of the debate about the federal workforce is driven by the false stereotype that federal employees are overpaid, underworked and concentrated mainly around Washington. On the contrary: According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, federal employees are paid less than their private-sector counterparts.

BLS compares the actual job duties of federal employees with similar duties of private-sector employees. In contrast, many of the think tanks criticizing the pay of federal workers use a "human capital" approach that instead compares particular characteristics, such as education, race and gender of federal workers with those of private-sector workers. As noted in a recent report by the Government Accountability Office, such comparisons are not appropriate for setting pay, and they reflect higher levels of discrimination — especially gender-based pay discrimination — found in the private sector that the federal government should not emulate.

I represent thousands of federal employees in Maryland's Fifth District, but people often forget that most federal employees do not work in the Washington metro area. In fact, 85 percent of federal employees live in other parts of the country. They help the victims of superstorm Sandy in New Jersey, fight wildfires in Colorado, protect our borders in Texas and Maine, support uniformed military personnel at bases across the country and fulfill many other obligations in communities from coast to coast.

Over the past two years, federal employees have repeatedly faced threats of a government shutdown that would stop their paychecks with virtually no notice. The looming automatic budget cuts in January would almost certainly require unpaid furloughs in most agencies.

Instead of treating federal employees as a convenient offset, we should recognize them for what they are: an outstanding asset. As budget talks continue, we must recognize the \$103 billion contribution that federal employees have already made, and ensure that future deficit reduction asks everyone to contribute his fair share toward building a better future for our country.

Rep. Steny Hoyer, D-Md., is the House Democratic Whip.