

# OCPA FaxLine Report

a public policy information service for members of the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs, Inc.

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Dear OCPA Member:

Thursday, August 27, 2009

As I mentioned in a previous *FaxLine Report*, the federal bureaucracy keeps getting bigger despite the tough economic times. Apparently, there's some added mineral in the water that government leaders drink which makes them totally oblivious to the need to tighten their own belts. Whatever that added mineral is, it evidently calcifies their logic and reasoning skills.

Unfortunately, those in Oklahoma government are suffering the same symptoms. For instance, while private-sector employment in our state dropped by 2.9 percent between January 2008 and July 2009, state government grew by 2.3 percent and local governments grew by 3.4 percent. Examining it over the past nine years, Oklahoma's private-sector employment rose by 2.8 percent, while state government employment rose by 9.6 percent and local government employment rose by a staggering 27.1 percent.

OCPA economist Scott Moody said, "Our previous research has shown that Oklahoma *already* had the fifth-highest government employment to private-sector employment ratio in the country in 2007 – and that was before the current recession even started. This new data suggests the ratio will significantly worsen in 2008 and beyond. Oklahoma's taxpayers are already shouldering \$2.8 billion in excessive government employment costs. The last thing taxpayers need during a recession is for this amount to go up."

Now wouldn't you think that the poor taxpayers who have to bear the brunt of the cost of government would be foremost in the minds of Oklahoma's elected officials? But that's not necessarily so. As Moody notes, "This is just another example of there being little connection between growth in the private sector and growth in state and local government employment." That is no doubt caused, in part, by far too few government officials (careerists, if you will) having little practical business managerial experience. They view citizens and business owners as merely reliable taxable revenue resources. This disregard by our public servants for the welfare of taxpayers who pay their salaries and finance every activity of government, is causing folks to get riled up.

It's a disturbing "disconnect" by those we elect to office. That is why so many serious people who don't typically engage in public affairs are voicing their concerns to government officials. There is indignation by citizens who operate their households and their businesses in a prudent and responsible manner, only to discover that those they have elected to office have little interest in having government follow suit.

Thomas Jefferson once stated, "A wise and frugal government, which shall leave men free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement, and shall not take from the mouth of labor the bread it has earned -- this is the sum of good government." Elected officials have forgotten that *true* "public servants" are *a necessity for good government*. In the future, true public servants will come from today's outraged citizens.

Until next time . . . Brett A. Magbee, Vice President for Operations

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