

# 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 13, 2009

Recently, a visit to Washington, D.C. brought to mind a comment a relative made about our nation's capitol when she visited it several decades earlier. She said she was impressed by the number of buildings and their enormous size. Then she realized that most were government buildings which meant each were filled with thousands and thousands of bureaucrats who were employed in the business of being involved in every area of our lives. The very thought made her nauseated. I too felt queasy about all the obvious massive government presence and started looking into the subject.

According to a U.S. Census Bureau report, we had 2,730,050 federal government civilian employees as of December 2007. Their payroll that same month totaled \$14,426,625,181. The functions these employees performed included: financial administration; other government administration; judicial and legal; police; correction; highways; air transportation; water transport & terminals; public welfare; health; hospitals; social insurance administration; parks and recreation; housing and community development; natural resources; national defense / international relations; postal service; space research & technology; other education; libraries; and "other."

Americans for Tax Reform recently analyzed what it costs to hire a new federal bureaucrat and determined that over a forty year working career an employee in the middle of the federal pay scale (GS-8) will cost \$4.27 million. ATR notes that the President's budget "calls for hiring 'several hundred thousand' federal employees over the next four years to replace retiring Baby Boomer bureaucrats, and to expand the federal workforce."

However, given our current economic crisis, this couldn't be a better time for the federal government to set an example of fiscal prudence than by tightening its own belt. As ATR notes, a slow attrition of the federal workforce that is anticipated by this Baby Boomer retirement, presents a real opportunity "to transform the bloated federal bureaucracy into a lean and accountable civil service."

Besides, the calculation of the cost to replace or hire 250,000 federal employees is staggering. ATR estimates it will obligate the taxpayer to the tune of over \$1 trillion. "This is during the same forty-year period where taxpayers will be on the hook to pay for the unfunded obligations of Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid (not to mention the national debt)."

No doubt the move toward nationalizing the largest industries in the nation will become the justification for a larger federal bureaucracy. Add nationalized health care to the mix and you will rapidly and dramatically expand the number of federal civilian employees and the subsequent bureaucracy which follows. These new hires will become part of the loyal voting block of devotees to bigger government which is sure to burden our economic recovery and make serious governmental reform a near impossibility. Ronald Reagan once said that "the closest we will ever get to eternal life on this planet is a government bureaucracy." And that, my friends, is hell on earth.

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

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