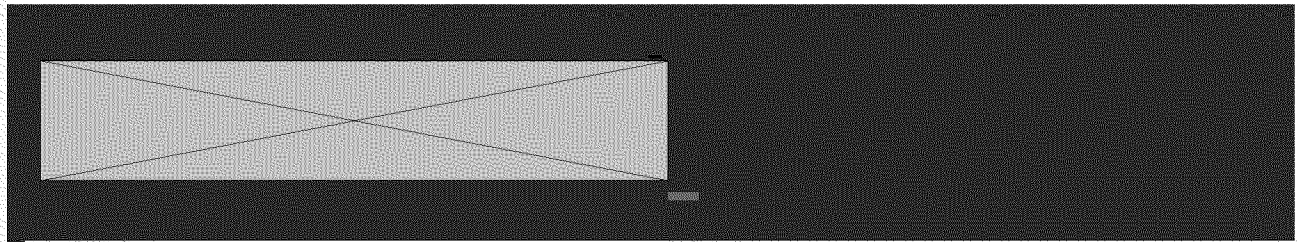


To: Jackson, Ryan[jackson.ryan@epa.gov]
From: The Washington Post
Sent: Wed 10/4/2017 4:01:58 PM
Subject: Federal Insider: How big is the federal workforce? Much bigger than you think.



How big is the federal workforce? Much bigger than you think.

By Joe Davidson

Sunrise at the U.S. Capitol. (Chris Maddaloni/Getty Images)

How big is the federal workforce?

Much bigger than you think.

A new study on “The True Size of Government,” by Paul C. Light, professor of public service at New York University, says the government’s “blended” workforce is 7 to 9 million strong — including contractors and grantees.

Grantees include a range of folks, such as the Ohio State University team that studied “Swedish massages for rascally rabbits,” as former senator Tom Coburn (R-Okla.) described in his “Wastebook 2014.”

That example was not in Light’s paper, and he does not diminish the work of anyone serving the government. But Light does raise a serious issue about the impact of so many non-employees.

“Although Washington’s blended workforce has an imperative role in the nation’s success, it may have grown so large and poorly sorted that it has become a threat to the very liberty it protects,” Light wrote. “With 7 to 9 million employees, the federal government’s blended workforce may have become too complicated and codependent to control.”

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“I think we’ve gotten close to it,” he said later, adding the use of private security forces by the military as an example.

The threat to liberty, he explained, “comes from the pressure to maintain and expand missions that are primarily for the benefit of one or more parts of the blended workforce and not necessarily for the benefit of the public.”

Think private prisons. Commercial prison operators have a financial incentive to get and keep people locked up, deprived of their liberty.

Tony Reardon, president of the National Treasury Employees Union, pointed to the IRS mandate to use private debt-collection agencies. “Twice this program has failed because of high cost and poor quality,” Reardon said, “yet Congress ignored the history and ordered a third attempt, knowing that highly trained federal employees are better equipped to collect the debts and uniquely authorized to provide assistance and options to low-income taxpayers.”

Broken down, the 9 million included about 2 million employees, 3.7 million contractors, 1.6 million grant employees, 1.3 million active duty military personnel and 500,000 Postal Service employees in 2015. The 7 million excludes the Postal Service, which does not receive congressional appropriations for its operations, and the military. The grantee and contractor numbers are estimates based on a Bureau of Economic Analysis model that considers money spent on projects and the labor needed to produce products.

“I suspect many taxpayers have no understanding that their tax dollars pay for 3.7 million private sector employees,” Reardon said. “The work of federal employees, on the other hand, is transparent and accountable.”

An important takeaway is “the study reminds us that the nation depends on a very large blended workforce that includes many more contract and grant employees than federal civil servants. It is easy to say the civil service is too big, but it is only part of the workforce needed to faithfully execute the laws,” Light said.

“The question is not whether we have too many government employees, but [do] we have the right blend to deliver the mission at the best price, value, and performance. ... This means we should be counting all the heads when we get into debates about cutting workforces.”

Even if an individual contractor earns less than a comparable federal employee, the unknown overhead costs companies charge debate, they said. Obama "actually shrunk the true size of government quite dramatically." From 2010 to 2015, the blended workforce dropped by 10 percent, but the people, so expensive to hire and train, according to the study published in *Environmental Affairs*, and other costs of doing business — enter the equation," he wrote. "Add overhead to the totals, and contractor employees can cost twice as much as federal employees." argued there was a 'dramatic expansion in the federal workforce' during the Obama administration, the president's chief executive officer of the Partnership for Public Service, agreed with the thrust of Light's point. But after the need for the right blend, "Previous administrations have not initially invested in the internal resources needed to understand when contractor help is needed, what expertise is required and how to integrate those resources to the effectively," Stires said. "In the end, we often find ourselves paying tax payer dollars also failing to achieve our intended results." motivation for contract firms and grant agencies, as is fair pay for everyone in the blended workforce." In Light's view, however, cost is not the only factor.

That raises the debate over the cost of using contractors instead of feds. In a *Washington Post* article, he said his blended workforce "and should be celebrating its performance as a whole even as we ask tough questions about how the program best fits the job," he said. Rather than pretending that only feds can do the job or contractors are always less expensive, "what I want to know is whether the blend is working for the public interest."

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