



An Open Letter to Senator-elect Scott Brown

February 2, 2010

Dear Senator-elect Brown:

I wanted to set the record straight regarding your recent comments on “This Week” on ABC that federal employees earn twice as much as those who work in the private sector.

Based on Bureau of Labor Statistics surveys, the present gap between public and private sector workers is some 26 percent—in favor of the private sector. A law was passed in 1990—the Federal Employees Pay Comparability Act (FEPCA)—to close that gap between public and private sector pay in stages. It has not, however, been implemented as intended. The disparity identified more than a decade ago, between federal employees and their private sector counterparts, still exists.

Comparing salaries of federal employees and private sector employees is not an apples-to-apples comparison. The only appropriate way to make a fair pay comparison is to compare similar jobs with one another. The federal workforce is a white collar, highly-educated workforce, consisting of such professionals as doctors, attorneys and scientists in virtually every discipline.

The White House took note of the educational level of the federal workforce, pointing out in its budget blueprint that 20 percent of federal employees hold either a master’s or professional degree, or a doctorate. This contrasts with 13 percent in the private sector. Overall, 51 percent of federal employees hold at least a college degree compared to 35 percent in the private sector.

It is clear that a great many federal employees who could make more money—and quite possibly, much more money—in the private sector choose public service instead.

I hope as you become more familiar with the efforts of the men and women of the federal workforce, you will begin to see the direct connection between their day-to-day contributions to our nation and the well-being of the American public they serve so diligently.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Colleen M. Kelley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Colleen M. Kelley  
National President