



Obama and Lawmakers Not Serious about Fiscal Conservatism

Americans have heard politicians talking a great deal about cutting spending, reducing the deficit, and employing a mentality of fiscal conservatism. But just how serious are they about it when they maintain loyalties to their constituents that are diametrically opposed to fiscal conservatism?

For example, when President Obama announced his pay freeze for federal workers last week, he touted it as an effort to cut federal spending and reduce the deficit. However, as noted by the [Examiner](#), the announcement is misleading, as 1.1 million federal workers will still be getting pay raises.



The [pay freeze](#), which allegedly applied to all civilian federal employees including those at the Pentagon, was estimated to save \$28 billion over the next five years and \$60 billion over the coming decades.

The pay freeze was recommended by two chairs of the president's deficit commission, who also suggested eliminating 200,000 federal jobs over the next decade, as well as 250,000 non-defense private contracting positions.

"Clearly, this is a difficult decision," said Office of Management and Budget Deputy Director for Management Jeffrey Zients. "Today, the president is clearly asking [federal employees] to make a sacrifice. We believe it is the first of many difficult steps ahead that we will be taking in the upcoming budget to put our nation on sound fiscal footing."

Critics of the pay freeze viewed it as a measure that disincentivizes talented professionals from pursuing federal jobs, but as noted by the deficit commission, the federal government's role is not to compete with the job market but to promote reductions in spending, a major issue particularly for this administration. *USA Today* revealed that the number of federal employees making more than \$150,000 a year soared significantly under the Obama administration, indicating that a federal pay freeze was an absolute necessity.

While the savings accrued from a federal pay freeze are notable, the proposal remained a small step in a major endeavor — as have been most of the lawmakers' suggestions.

Conservative pundit Glenn Beck noted in his Pittsburgh performance of *Broke* that the recommendations made by the federal government to reduce spending thus far have been the equivalent of removing a sliver of a tomato and a shred of lettuce from a high-calorie cheeseburger as a way to maintain a healthy weight.

Even this small step, however, was little more than smoke and mirrors.



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on December 6, 2010

The *Examiner* writes, "According to analysis on the subject, for the next two years that Obama claimed federal workers will have their pay 'frozen,' a whopping \$2.5 billion will be spent on pay raises for those federal employees."

Angered, though unsurprised, the writer continued, "The trickery in Obama's fraudulent claim about a two-year pay freeze for federal employees lies in the all-important distinction between cost-of-living adjustments and step increases for federal employees, which happen on a constant basis."

The pay freeze that Obama was alluding to was the cost-of-living adjustments. Step increases in the salary of two-thirds of all federal employees will continue unmolested, as they are automatic.

To boot, the *Examiner* adds, "Besides the General Schedule employees, almost 200,000 wage-grade federal employees get pay raises, too! Furthermore, there is also the issue of all the federal workers who will get promotions, which automatically entails an increase in their salaries."

Attributing Obama's sleight-of-hand to a campaign for votes in 2012, the writer concludes, "I think those pay raises are nothing but barely disguised bribes."

In addition to President Obama's lukewarm efforts to save money, [Democratic and Republican lawmakers have spoken out of both sides of their mouths on the issue.](#)

Republican Senator Saxby Chambliss has articulated support for cuts in federal spending but rejects proposals to cut farm programs, as did Democratic Senator Blanche Lincoln, who said, "I am standing up for farmers and ranchers and all of rural American once again by opposing cuts that will harm the hardworking men and woman who are the backbone of our rural economy."

Chambliss attempted to defend his hypocrisy by explaining, "I'm against the wrong kind of spending." But in today's economy, there is very little "right kind of spending."

Similarly, Republican Senator Jeff Sessions has announced his support of cuts in federal spending, but vowed to resist cuts in the space program, contending that the money taken out of NASA would simply be used for programs that he could not support.

Additionally, Republican Representative Todd Akin, an alleged supporter of pulling America out of "historic debt," has staunchly opposed cuts in Pentagon projects and clarified his stance against them in a press release he issued.

Clearly, the lawmakers' loyalties to their own interests and their states' pet projects remain an obstacle in deficit reduction.

Arizona Republican Representative Jeff Flake remarked on the issue, "There are not enough statesmen who will stand up and say, cut it even when it is in my district."

Photo: White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs responds to questions on the disclosure of secret diplomatic documents by online whistleblower Wikileaks, and President Obama's urging of a pay freeze for 2 million federal employees, Nov. 29, 2010, at the White House in Washington: AP Images



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