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## Senate Approves 3.1% Pay Raise for Federal Workers

By *Christopher Lee*  
Washington Post Staff Writer

Federal employees can look forward to an average pay increase of 3.1 percent next year.

The Senate passed a 3.1 percent raise for the government's 1.8 million civilian workers this week when it voted 93 to 1 to approve a \$141 billion spending bill for the departments of Transportation, the Treasury, and Housing and Urban Development. The House approved an identical raise in its version of the measure in June. Although the two chambers must reconcile differences in the bills, the pay provision is not expected to change.

In approving the measure, lawmakers set aside President Bush's two-tiered pay proposal -- which called for a 2.3 percent raise for federal civilian employees and a 3.1 percent increase for the military -- and decided to award both groups the higher amount.

"Military personnel and federal civilian employees -- both white collar and blue collar -- work for the same employers, often side by side, in defense of our nation's homeland security," Sen. Barbara A. Mikulski (D-Md.) said in a statement.

The raise would take effect in January. Federal employees, on average, have received an annual pay raise of at least 2 percent in every year but two since 1969, according to the Congressional Research Service. In 1983 and 1986, there was no increase.

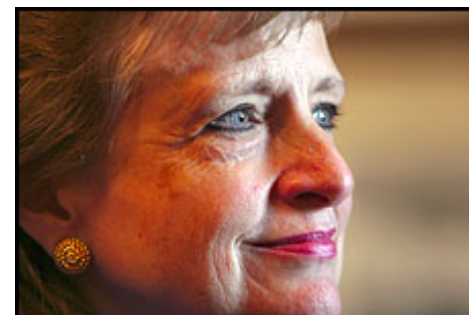
Federal pay varies widely by profession and location, but the average salary for all occupations is \$63,715, according to Office of Personnel Management data.

Federal employee unions cheered the Senate vote. Colleen M. Kelley, president of the National Treasury Employees Union, urged "the White House to respect the action taken by Congress." John Gage, president of the American Federation of Government Employees, called passage of the 3.1 percent raise "a victory for all federal employees."

Because the annual pay raise varies by geographic location, federal workers in the Washington-Baltimore area can expect to see a slightly higher increase of about 3.44 percent, according to the Federal Salary Council, a government advisory panel.

Senators voted to pass up their 1.9 percent pay raise -- which would have increased their salaries by \$3,100, to \$165,200 -- saying that doing so was symbolically important at a time of rising budget deficits and big expenditures for Hurricane Katrina rebuilding. The House has not taken that step; both chambers must agree if salaries are to be frozen. Congressional pay raises are automatically implemented every year unless lawmakers vote to block them.

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