

[Home](#) > [News](#) > [Boston Globe](#) > [Editorial / Opinion](#) > [Editorials](#)

A Bush slap for workers

The Boston Globe

8/29/2003

PRESIDENT BUSH has pulled a Labor Day surprise on federal workers, announcing in a letter to vacationing congressional leaders that he is using his authority to cut the size of the pay raise most workers were to receive next year. He blamed the move on the cost of fighting terrorism, but he could as easily have blamed his fiscally irresponsible tax cuts for the rich. This is the second time Bush has limited pay raises for the civilian federal work force while rewarding his political supporters. Two years ago he reinstated a cash bonus program for 2,100 political appointees at federal agencies, a system that the Clinton administration abolished because it promoted favoritism. It is a pattern with Bush: reward those who are already well off and squeeze the rank-and-file.

ADVERTISEMENT Last month the House Appropriations Committee rejected Bush's request for \$500 million for a "human capital performance fund," slashing the amount to \$2.5 million. The committee also recommended a 4.1 percent pay raise for federal workers, the same amount Bush proposed for the military. Committee members rightly contended that civil service and military employees are public servants who should be entitled to the same raise because they often work side by side. But the higher pay raise was not voted on before Congress's summer recess.

In the letter Wednesday to congressional leaders, Bush said he was changing the pay structure, invoking "national emergency or serious economic conditions," and would limit the raises to 2 percent. Federal workers had been expecting a 2.7 percent increase just to keep up with inflation. Instead they'll get across-the-board raises of 1.5 percent, with the remaining 0.5 percent for locality pay, a premium for workers who live in high-cost areas. About two-thirds of the government's 1.8 million civilian employees will get only the 1.5 percent raise.

It's not unusual for presidents to recommend a lesser pay raise by using a loophole in a federal act designed to close the pay gap between civilian and private sector workers. But the president's argument that the government can't afford the \$11 billion to fully fund the 2.7 percent raises is an attempt to absolve himself of responsibility for the government's projected record \$480 billion budget shortfall next year.

Let's face it: This administration is no fan of federal workers. It is seeking to privatize federal jobs, waive and restrict union memberships for federal workers, and deny overtime pay for millions of white-collar workers. John Sweeney, president of the AFL-CIO, got it right when he said, "Bush is making federal employees pay for his own fiscal recklessness."

When Congress returns next week, it should undo some of the damage, starting with fully funding these pay raises. When Congress returns next week, it should undo some of the damage, starting with fully funding these pay raises.

© Copyright 2003 Globe Newspaper Company.

[PRINTER FRIENDLY VERSION](#) [E-MAIL TO A FRIEND](#)[feedback](#) | [help](#) | [site map](#) | [advertising](#) | [globe archives](#)

© 2003 The New York Times Company

TOOLS[PRINTER FRIENDLY VERSION](#)[E-MAIL TO A FRIEND](#)[TOP E-MAILED ARTICLES](#)**SEARCH GLOBE ARCHIVES**[Today \(free\)](#)[Yesterday \(free\)](#)[Past 30 days](#)[Last 12 months](#)[Advanced Search](#)**SPONSORED LINKS**