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## Loftier Limits for Retirement Savers

By [Stephen Barr](#)

Friday, October 20, 2006; Page D04

Federal employees will be allowed to invest up to \$15,500 in their retirement savings plan in calendar year 2007, \$500 more than this year's limit, the Internal Revenue Service has announced.

The elective deferral limit, which applies to 401(k) plans in the private sector as well the federal government's Thrift Savings Plan, was adjusted for inflation, as required under the tax code.

The TSP, the 401(k)-type program for government employees, allows investors to change their contribution amounts at any time. Investors can designate withholdings from their biweekly pay in either percentage or dollar amounts.

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Employees Retirement System, though, should structure their investments so they do not hit the IRS dollar limit until the end of the year, in order to continue receiving matching government contributions. Those covered by the old Civil Service Retirement System and persons in the military do not receive matching contributions.

The IRS also announced that the "catch-up" contribution amount will remain unchanged at \$5,000 in 2007.

Catch-up contributions are allowed during a calendar year for people age 50 or older who have hit the elective deferral limit or who are on a pace to do so by the end of the year. There are no matching contributions for catch-ups, which were approved by Congress in 2002 as a way to help employees who did not have an opportunity to participate in a 401(k)-type program early in their career to save more for retirement.

**Back to the Drawing Board**

A federal district court judge has directed the Homeland Security Department and the Office of Personnel Management to revise or abandon regulations that failed to ensure that Homeland Security employees could bargain collectively and that went too far in limiting the topics that could be put on the negotiating table.

U.S. District Judge *Rosemary M. Collyer* also told the agencies to file a status report on their efforts to fix the regulations by July 17. Her request for a report should not be seen as a deadline for the agencies to complete decisions on what to do about the regulations, she said.

**Transcript**

[Federal Diary Live](#)  
Washington Post columnist Stephen Barr answers questions about navigating the federal workplace. Federal Diary runs weekdays in the Business news section of The Post.

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In August 2005, Collyer ruled in a lawsuit brought by the National Treasury Employees Union and other unions that the department had gone too far when it came up with new rules that called into question whether the department would be obligated to abide by binding contracts. She issued an injunction to block the regulations, and her ruling was upheld by a three-judge federal appeals panel in June. The government decided not to take an appeal to the Supreme Court.

Government lawyers asked Collyer to close the case, saying that would not prevent NTEU from returning to court if it had objections to any revised rules. But she declined the request, and issued an order saying that "this court shall retain jurisdiction over this matter for all purposes."

### At Center Ice

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The Partnership for Public Service and the Washington Capitals will team up tomorrow night to honor federal employees at the Capitals' game against the Tampa Bay Lightning.

The Caps are sponsoring a Federal Employees' Night with the Partnership, which seeks to encourage more young people and mid-career professionals to consider working in the federal government. For discount tickets, go to <http://www.ourpublicservice.org> .

### Talk Shows

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*Steven L. Katz* , an author and consultant on federal management issues, will be the guest on "FEDtalk" at 11 a.m. today on <http://federalnewsradio.com> and WFED radio (1050 AM).

Lt. Gen. *Roger A. Brady* , deputy chief of staff for manpower and personnel at Air Force headquarters, will be the guest on "The IBM Business of Government Hour" at 9 a.m. tomorrow on WJFK radio (106.7 FM).

*Diary associate Eric Yoder contributed to this column. My e-mail address is [isbarrs@washpost.com](mailto:isbarrs@washpost.com).*

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