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Are Government Workers Really Earning More?
Neil Cavuto Interview with Partnership for Public Service President and CEO Max Stier

CAVUTO: You know, there is a growth industry here and like we've been saying it is the government. Not only was it the big entity hiring but apparently the only big one paying too. There is a sterling survey in today's "USA Today" that reveals government jobs across eight out of 10 industries pay more, sometimes significantly more. In fact, substantially more than their private counterparts especially when you factor in things like benefits.

The average federal employees are earning almost 40,000 more than their private-sector counterparts when you throw in those pennies and that suits my next guest just fine. Max Stier is the president and CEO of Partnership for Public Service says that the government should do what it takes to get the best workers.

Well, on that we agree. You're getting what you want. You know, you pay a lot and you have benefits enough and lo and behold they come (INAUDIBLE), right?

MAX STIER, PARTNERSHIP FOR PUBLIC SERVICE, CEO: Well, you - that's terrific that we agree that we want the right people in those jobs because they're doing important things. Half of the federal workforce is about keeping us safe in this country. 600,000 folks are at the Department of Defense. If you look at the workforce, half of it at the VA, DOD and the Department of Homeland Security. We need the right people in those jobs to make sure that we're getting what we need as a country.

CAVUTO: All right. But it is a little disproportioned, don't you think? What was happening lately, I mean, we're - I have nothing against government workers. I have worked with them. I have many friends who are government workers. They are fine, good people. I am not saying they are, you know, aliens.. I am just saying that I would like to spread the wealth and when it is government jobs that seem to be the hot sector - that is not how an economy grows.

STIER: Yes. And I think I'm glad you said seems because the truth of the matter is the federal work force today is the same size as it was in 1967 despite the fact that we have 100 million more Americans. So, in fact, we don't -

CAVUTO: What do you mean the same - we have the same number of federal rep or the same percentage of the population?

STIER: No, no. Same number actually as a percentage of the population is a lot lower. We have the same number of federal workers as we did in the 1960s.

CAVUTO: I think you just made that up.

STIER: Well, you know what, you want to bet a drink that one?

CAVUTO: No.

STIER: Because I'll be OK -

(CROSSTALK)

CAVUTO: Food maybe but not a drink. I'll look into that, Max. You're a good guy but I just really do think you made that up.

STIER: But that's fine. You say that and guess what, I hope that it will mean you will question other things you have said when you find out that in fact I am right.

CAVUTO: All right. Well, then riddle me this, Max.

STIER: Yes, absolutely.

CAVUTO: When we have a situation where taxpayers who essentially fund the government are looking at the folks they're funding getting paid more than they are making, that alone seems upside-down, doesn't?

STIER: Absolutely. If in fact that was the case and again the data doesn't show that.

CAVUTO: I just pointed to this "USA Today" report -

(CROSSTALK)

STIER: Again, I tell you, if you read and believe everything you see in the newspaper then you got to look a little deeper. The truth of the matter -

(CROSSTALK)

CAVUTO: This is a fairly exhaustive report. You're not dissing "USA Today," aren't you?

STIER: I'm not dissing "USA Today" but I'm saying to you that the questions they're asking are great questions. We should be figuring out what we need to do to get the right talent but the facts that they have are not demonstrating what they say they do. The truth of the matter is -

CAVUTO: You get (INAUDIBLE) yes or no?

STIER: Well, let's focus on what they said. They said that certain job occupations you make more as a federal employee but that is like they're saying they compare for example, you know, cooks. Well, if you compare what you make at McDonald's versus what the White house chef makes maybe you believe that the -

CAVUTO: But they weren't doing that. They weren't doing that. You know they weren't.

(CROSSTALK)

STIER: No, no. They were.

(CROSSTALK)

CAVUTO: They were comparing the chef at the White House to the guy who works in the fryer lighter?

STIER: What I'm saying yes, they are. Because they're comparing averages of the private sector and occupations.

CAVUTO: OK.

STIER: And so the same thing on doctors or engineers. If you think about it, the fact is they are looking at averages in the private sector and comparing them to the federal government and you're talking about different things. It's not an apples to apples comparison.

CAVUTO: Well, Max, you speak on behalf of your folks, fine. And you are in their corner -

STIER: No, no. I'm not -

(CROSSTALK)

CAVUTO: I'm going to check these numbers and I can get you back. And if I am wrong -

STIER: Yes.

CAVUTO: Two drinks. All right.

STIER: Two drinks. OK. And a meal with it.

CAVUTO: Maybe that fryer lighter thing at McDonald's. But Max, thank you very much.

STIER: Thank you very much. You have a great evening.

CAVUTO: All right. You too.