
Schussel Slices and Dices the Numbers Ginsu Style by Robert Schusel, Ph.D 1/30/14

Schussel Slices and Dices the Numbers

Ginsu Style

Vallejo Employees still right up there

By Robert Schussel, Ph.D

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After looking at some of the comments made about my recent article "Analysis of Public Employee Database" I decided to look at the raw data (239,000 records) that the State Controller used to calculate City wage averages.

What I discovered was that 50% of the employees in cities similar in size to Vallejo were part time (using criteria from the California Public Policy Center). While some part time employees in other cities were in Parks and Recreation positions other job titles in various cities included interns, part time laborers, crossing guards, library assistants, police cadets, cable TV assistants etc. This article is an analysis of the State Controller database total wages with part time employees excluded. I had to ask myself the question: Would this change Vallejo's wage ranking? The concern addressed here is if the original analysis using all employees from comparison cities unfairly placed Vallejo near the top wage ranking. The short answer is NO.

Methodology

To determine whether a city employee was part time, criteria employed by the California Public Policy Center was used. The Center has written numerous articles using the State Controller employee wage database.

If any of the below conditions are found the person is considered a part time employee (using the Center's criteria).

- 1). A salary that is less than the minimum specified for that position-- eliminates individuals who worked for only part of the year.
- 2) The person did not receive health benefits and was not paid for opting out of health benefits.
- 3) No monies were contributed by the city towards an employee's pension.

The number of residents per employee was calculated by dividing the population of a city by the number of full time employees.

Example: Vallejo's population is 117,112 and the number of full time employees is 302

Vallejo Residents per full time employee= $117,112/302 = 388$. The higher number the number the fewer employees per resident to deliver services.

Caveats

- 1) The Controller database contains unaudited data which means it may not be 100% accurate.
- 2) The City of Victorville was excluded from the analysis of cities with populations between 100K and 150K because individual employee pension information was not included.
- 3) The 35 full time Vallejo GVRD employees are not included in this analysis as GVRD salaries are not paid by the City of Vallejo. GVRD funds come from taxes (\$5,254,000 including Measure K) which also helps pay for 100 part time employees.

Findings

1) In Solano County, the City of Vallejo has the fewest employees per resident but pays the highest average total wage. Having fewer but higher paid employees means that Vallejo citizens get fewer services for their tax dollar.

2) Vallejo pays its full time employees an average total wage that is near the top compared to cities with populations between 100,000 and 150,000. (Bars in blue are the Bay Area Cities).

Vallejo pays approximately \$20,000 more in total wages per full time employee than the average city in the comparison group (populations between 100,000 and 150,000 residents).

Comments

The State Controller's employee wage database is the best source available for making wage comparisons across cities. As with analyses from other sources, the City of Vallejo was once again found to be paying some of the highest (average) total wages per full time employee compared to other cities of similar size in California as well as Solano County.

The question I keep asking is: How does a city (Vallejo) that just exited Bankruptcy pay some of the highest average total wages in the state? Vallejo is even high compared to most similar sized cities in the Bay Area even though our cost of living (especially housing) is significantly lower than most of the other Bay Area cities in this analysis.

Data from my prior article showed that Vallejo's total budget for City employees is about average compared to similar sized cities. But paying a higher average total wage per employee means the City of Vallejo has fewer employees to provide basic services.

Final thoughts

It is my fervent hope that this analysis will help enlighten the employee unions as well as the new City Council members that our expenses (employee wages and benefits) need to be curtailed so that more employees can be hired.

If we continue to grant wages increases etc. not only will taxpayers be denied the services they deserve but we could easily slip back into Bankruptcy. If that happens nobody comes out on top no matter how you slice it.