

# The Washington Post

## Savings Estimates for Insourcing Federal Work Queried

Monday, December 28, 2009; A14

The current debate about savings to be had from converting contractor jobs to ones held by federal employees is far more nuanced and complex than suggested by Walter Pincus ["Congress gives Pentagon funds to replace expensive contractors," Fed Page, Dec. 24].

Comparing a federal employee's compensation to the full cost of using a contractor (which includes salary, benefits, equipment, travel, overhead and other costs that also apply to federal employees) is analytically unsound and raises questions about the claim that the Pentagon can save \$44,000 per position insourced. In addition, this generalized average has little practical value since it ignores the range of skills and personnel costs involved for contractors or federal employees.

Further, as The Post reported Dec. 23 [ "As cyberattacks increase, U.S. faces shortage of security talent,"], the government faces unprecedented competition for people with the skills needed to execute its increasingly complex missions and often cannot afford what the global marketplace has determined those skills are worth. To access those and other critical skills, the government will have to both sharply increase compensation for such work and continue to partner with contractors. In those cases, the "savings" assumptions become irrelevant.

Before converting contractor employees to government status, the Defense Department and Congress should take a rigorous look at whether they are truly targeting the most needed skills and whether the purported savings are real.

*Stan Soloway, Arlington*

*The writer is president and chief executive of the Professional Services Council; he served as deputy undersecretary of defense in the Clinton administration.*

© 2009 The Washington Post Company