



Written by [Bruce Walker](#) on December 16, 2010

Washington Suburbs Surviving Recession

America is in the throes of economic hardship. Certain regions of the country, the once thriving Great Lakes Region, the greatest industrial area in the world, and energy-producing states, such as West Virginia and Louisiana, have been particularly hard hit.

The dream of American affluence, however, is alive and well in one part of our nation: the seven suburban counties and cities around the [District of Columbia](#). Two of those, Fairfax and Loudoun, were the only counties in the entire nation that had a median household income in excess of \$100,000. [Falls Church](#), which is both a city and a county, had the highest median in the nation at \$113,000 per household.



Why are the environs of our national capital so rich? Government, instead of commerce or skilled professions, has become the quickest way to wealth in America. Men who start businesses face a daunting hurdle of federal and state regulations (those who want to drill for oil, for example, must make a huge capital investment, have great knowledge, and lots of guts — but despite all that, a single mistake by a competitor can freeze successful, safe drilling, which is what happened in the Gulf of Mexico.) Those who wish to become neurosurgeons or other highly trained physicians face greedy tort lawyers, the massive volumes of federal regulations in ObamaCare, and years of loans to repay.

On the other hand, working for the federal government in some agency such as, say, the Department of Education, involves virtually no risk at all. Educational degrees are often required for higher positions in the Civil Service, but the required degrees are often in mushy and undemanding disciplines such as “Education,” “Public Administration,” and “Political Science.” Once hired into the Federal Civil Service, one’s tenure is almost certain; promotions and raises are almost automatic as well. The keys to advancement into the elites who live near Washington are: (1) Slavish and uncritical support for the “mission” of the agency, department, or bureau — the antithesis of the what is required to survive in the free market, and (2) Political connections based upon loyalty to a particular political party or powerful politician.

Federal government employment also provides [higher pay](#) than comparable jobs in the private sector. Health care, leave time, regular working hours and pensions are all better in the federal government than in the private sector. The cities and counties of Virginia and Maryland within commuting distance of the District of Columbia have become the richest in America because the higher level federal workers in Washington ride home each night to neighborhoods inhabited by other government bureaucrats. The job security of these neighbors in well-off suburbs has provided these bureaucrats with most stable home values as well.

After several decades in federal service, many bureaucrats can retire. Where do they work then? In the



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private sector, but with a twist: many of these retired federal bureaucrats serve as consultants or lobbyists for firms who must work with the federal agency that the bureaucrat used to work for. He knows the ins and outs, the right sort of language to use in applications, and many of the individuals in the agency. Who, ultimately, pays for the great general wealth of these communities outlying Washington, D.C. in Virginia and Maryland? Taxpayers, of course. No oil is being drilled; no patients are being cured; no inventions are being made; no crops are being grown. Paper, though, lots of paper is getting pushed.

Nice work, if you can get it.



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