



Written by [Ralph R. Reiland](#) on May 15, 2011

## Swimming in Taxpayers' Cash

It was the kind of job where your mother would say to grow up and get a real job if you did it past your mid-twenties.

Well, it's different now, thanks to the explosion of public sector wages and benefits, thanks to the runaway cost of employee compensation where there's no capitalist owner to put a lid on excessive fat and waste.

"Newport lifeguards swimming in cash" stated the headline on an editorial in the *Orange County Register* in California on May 10.



"High pay and benefits for lifeguards is the latest example of frustrating compensation for public employees," said the editorial. "More than half the city's full-time lifeguards are paid a salary of over \$100,000 and all but one of them collect more than \$100,000 in total compensation."

Including the cost of fringes, the city's two highest paid lifeguards collected \$211,451 and \$203,481 in annual wages and benefits last year, reported the *Orange County Register*. Of the city's 14 full-time lifeguards, 13 pocketed over \$120,000 in wages and benefits, and more than half the guards collected over \$150,000 in total compensation last year.

By far, the lifeguards are doing financially better than the people who pay their salaries. The annual median household income in the county is \$71,735, and that's often with two full-time workers per household.

Not included in the aforementioned \$100,000 and \$200,000 lifeguard salaries is an annual allowance of \$400 for "sun protection."

And so we're now at this crazy point where a "public servant" making \$203,481 won't pay for his own Coppertone. Taxpayers in households with earnings of not even half of what the guard makes are expected to pick up the tab.

Making things even more cushy, many of the lifeguards work four days a week, 10 hours a day, allowing for some easy sitting at both ends of their shifts when the beaches are basically deserted, in addition to enjoying a schedule of endless three day weekends that are a full third longer than the weekends of the people who are paying the bill.

"Lifeguards are organized as part of the fire department," reported the *Orange County Register*.

"Lifeguard salaries here are well within the norm of other city employees," said Brent Jacobsen, president of the Lifeguard Management Association, crazily thinking that hard working people making the median income would be just thrilled to hear that all those lifetime loafers in the city's offices with their late starts, long lunches, early quits and lethargic in-betweens are also pocketing \$100,000 and \$200,000.

And then there's an organized lifeguard's work rules. Can we get rid of him at 50 if he can't swim fast



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anymore, or is that disallowed under the contract?

And what happens to a slow-swimming old taxpayer if he's 50 yards out in the water and a Great White is spotted swimming in his direction? Is a guy who won't even pay for his own sun tan lotion required to jump in? Or will the guard just stand at the edge of the water and yell "Swim faster"?

In New York, there's also a Rubber Room where the city's worst and nuttiest teachers get paid \$100,000-plus to sleep or play cards for years on end.

Bottom line, we're totally broke and no one is stopping the craziness.

**Ralph R. Reiland** is an associate professor of economics and the B. Kenneth Simon professor of free enterprise at Robert Morris University in Pittsburgh.



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