



“Challenging People to Shape a Better Future Now”

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Graphic Designer

MONICA J. FOSTER
Seattle Office Coordinator

JULIE KEEFE
SUSAN FRIED
Photographers



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415 N. Killingsworth St.,
P.O. Box 5455, Portland, OR 97228.

Telephone (503) 285-5555.

E-mail: info@theskanner.com

World Wide Web site:

<http://www.theskanner.com>

Fax: (503) 285-2900

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Trashing Workers to Balance Budget

Congress is on fire to balance the federal budget, and they don't care who they take as prisoners in the process. There are at least two proposals to freeze federal salaries for yet another year (they have been frozen since 2011), and to continue to demonize federal workers as do-nothing folks who don't need raises. Meanwhile, President Obama has asked for a minimal half percent a year increase while many in the private sector are seeing wages rise. Of course, everyone is struggling with unemployment rates rising to 8.2 percent. Still, it is onerous that federal employees seem to be bearing the brunt of this budget crisis.

It is even worse when we understand that African Americans make up 17.4 percent of the federal workforce, compared to 10.1 percent of the civilian labor force. Of course, the higher the pay grade, the fewer African Americans. Whatever the pay grade, it is clear that African Americans are far more likely to get proportional pay in the federal government than in the private sector. Thus, proposals to cut federal pay disproportionately affect African Americans. Somebody could perhaps argue that cuts are race neutral, but I'm not buying. The fact is that the federal government has been most open to African American workers, and most willing to offer relatively equal pay.

Too many would like to characterize government workers as ineffective without looking at the fact that most federal government and



BENNETT COLLEGE

Julianne Malveaux

private workers do their jobs and then some. Everybody can tell trifling somebody-done-me-wrong songs, but the real deal is most workers do their best. Those members of Congress that target federal workers ought to look long at hard and the results they get from the folks who process Social Security checks, manage veterans' benefits, move money from the federal government to state and local governments, and manage the process. These folks need kudos not the killing remarks that suggest that they don't earn their money.

It's a rough job market and many, including federal employees, make the choice to take pay

who have steady and well-paid employment, but at the same time, who wants to work without appreciation or a raise? Does our Congress cut off our nose to spite our face by targeting federal employees?

As a CEO, I've had to preside over the difficult task of imposing pay freezes and hoping that my staff would understand that frozen pay is better than no pay or lay-

federal employees?

There are two reasons that I am passionate about this. First, although many federal workers earn more than \$150,000 a year, too many, mostly Black women, are at the GS-1 to GS-4 level, earning less than \$40,000 annually. These women raise families, send children to school and overcome odds. They need a raise. They aren't going to get it from a

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offs. At the same time, I shudder when I think that our federal government cannot appreciate, even in a small way, those who keep our trains running, our balls in the air,

Congress that demonizes government workers, and that is a tragedy. Secondly, African Americans are more likely to get fair treatment from a civil service system than from the ordinary labor market, and it seems that this is a reason that some legislators seem to go after government employees.

While Congress must be prudent about our budget, they shouldn't take it out of the hide of government workers, especially those at the very bottom. There is no fairness in freezing government salaries while other salaries rise.

Julianne Malveaux is a Washington, D.C.-based economist and writer. She is President Emerita of Bennett College for Women in Greensboro, N.C.

How can Congress push to maintain Bush tax cuts, but fail to raise wages for federal employees?

freezes instead of looking for other work. Are we losing some of our best employees, though, when we impose a freeze for the third year in a row? It may be hard for some others to sympathize with folks

our elders compensated, our work done. Half a percent is a small amount, and it hits those at the bottom, not the top. How can Congress push to maintain Bush tax cuts, but fail to raise wages for

Florida, Again, Center of Vote Suppression

Recent attempts to prevent voters of color in Florida from fully exercising their constitutional right to vote suffered twin blows last week. First, on Thursday, the Federal District Court in Miami granted a preliminary injunction effectively blocking several key provisions of Florida's new and restrictive voter registration laws. Calling the new registration requirements "onerous," the judge sided with the National Urban League, our Florida affiliates and a coalition of civil rights and voting rights groups who believe that these illegitimate and burdensome restrictions have only one purpose – to suppress the votes of millions of Floridians.

A second victory for voting rights occurred on Thursday when the U.S. Department of Justice Voting Section informed Florida's Secretary of State that the state's current effort to purge voting rolls – allegedly to keep non-citizens from voting – was likely in violation of the 1965 Voting Rights Act and the 1993 National Voter Registration Act. The state has targeted about 2,700 so-called ineligible voters for removal from the rolls unless they provide proof of citizenship within 30 days. The effort is so flawed that hundreds of legal residents, including several heroic World War II veterans, have received insulting letters demanding proof of citizenship.

In its letter challenging the

TO BE EQUAL

Marc Morial



state's actions, the Justice Department said that Florida failed to comply with Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act because it has not, as required, submitted any changes affecting voting to the federal court or the U.S. Attorney General for review. The letter also stated that under the National Voter Registration Act, any program to eliminate ineligible persons from the voting rolls must be completed 90 days prior to a federal primary or general election and must be "uniform and non-discriminatory." With Florida's primary slated for Aug. 14, the state has clearly missed the deadline. And with Hispanics compris-

These federal rulings are a victory for Floridians and for those of us on the front lines working to protect one of our most precious rights – the right to vote. Let's not forget that because of voting irregularities in Florida, including clear instances of voter suppression, a mere total of 537 votes and the

across the country.

The National Urban League's "Occupy the Vote" campaign has made the protection of voting rights our No. 1 issue in 2012. We are calling on citizens to join us in the fight against voter suppression laws that are clearly designed to keep people of color, students, the

'We must fight voter suppression, we must educate citizens so that new laws won't catch them unaware on Election Day, and we must empower them to get to the polls'

— National Urban League 2012 State of Black America – Occupy the Vote

United States Supreme Court decided the 2000 presidential election. The nation vowed to never let that happen again. But, Florida

elderly and people with disabilities from the polls. We have also teamed up with the NAACP to sponsor a voter empowerment hotline to enable callers to register to vote and report problems: 1-866-MYVOTE-1. Nothing will have a greater impact on the future of Black America in 2012 than the vote. That is why we will continue the fight to remove barriers and empower all citizens to fully exercise this precious right.

Marc H. Morial is president and CEO of the National Urban League

Hundreds of legal residents, including several heroic World War II veterans, have received insulting letters demanding proof of citizenship

ing the majority of those targeted by this measure, we believe it also fails the non-discrimination test.

has emerged as a key battleground in a new and unprecedented war on voter rights currently underway