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## Which governments pay public employees the most?

### Why public salary transparency?

In 2011, Sunshine Review chose 152 local governments as the focus of research on public employee salaries. The editors of Sunshine Review selected eight states with relevant political contexts (listed alphabetically):

1. California
2. Florida
3. Illinois
4. Michigan
5. New Jersey
6. Pennsylvania
7. Texas
8. Wisconsin

Within these states, the editors of Sunshine Review focused on the most populous cities, counties, and school districts, as well as the emergency services entities within these governments. The purpose of this selection process was to develop articles on governments affecting the most citizens.

The salary information gathered for those states is a combination of existing online resources and state Freedom of Information

Act requests sent out to the governments. Research and public records request focused on data from 2008-2011 and included other relevant salary data.

### Local government salary trends

#### By state

New Jersey and Michigan had the narrowest range of salaries for top salaries for public officials. See Appendix A. In New Jersey, top salaries range from \$180 thousand a year to \$275 thousand a year. For Michigan employees, high earners made between \$120 thousand a year and \$235 thousand a year.

Salaries on the high end for public officials in Pennsylvania, Texas, and Wisconsin tend to range in the mid-\$100K to the mid- to high-\$300K a year.

For Florida officials, the range of high end salaries shifts up. High earners in Florida's public sector make between \$170,000-\$420,000.

The two states with the broadest range of high salaries, and the highest salaries, are California and Illinois.

California is home of the city of Bell, California, which was the setting of

widespread salary corruption where officials were paying themselves exorbitant salaries. This includes the city manager Robert Rizzo, who earned \$787,637 in 2008. Following this high salary is the Senior Physician in Los Angeles, who earned over \$400,000 in 2008.

State	Number of employees earning over \$150,000
CA	1332
FL	171
IL	867
MI	29
NJ	105
PA	50
TX	194
WI	39

\* Dates range from 2008-2011

In Illinois, Cook County workers are the two top earners. The Cook County CEO of Health Care earned a \$500,000 salary in 2011.

Following this, the next top salary is that of the Chicago Superintendent of Police, who earned \$310,000 during that same time period.

Additionally, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emmanuel made \$216,210 in 2011.

## Medical personnel

Medical personnel earn more than most governors—in 2010, for example, the average governor's salary was \$130,595.<sup>1</sup> Compare this average to top earners in Florida's public sector. In Jacksonville, Florida, the top salary for 2011 was \$208,119.00 for an employee in the Medical Examiner's office. For Hillsborough County, the highest earner in the county as of

2011 is the Chief Medical Examiner, who brings in \$250,411.20

Fire personnel

Fire personnel high earners make salaries in the high \$100,000s. The highest earners tend to be fire chiefs. In Jacksonville, the Fire Chief brings in the most money in the Fire Department, earning \$154,875.00 in 2011. In Grand Rapids, Michigan, the highest earner in the Fire Department is the Fire Chief who earns a salary of \$117,364. For comparison, fire fighters earn a salary range of \$38,269-\$58,467.

## Top salaries

The ten highest paid local government officials of the 152 governments surveyed are included in Table 1.<sup>2</sup>

Table 1: Ten highest paid local government officials, 2008-2011

Name	City, State	Position	Salary	Year of data
Rizzo, Robert	Bell	City Manager	\$787,637	2009
Foley, William	Cook County	CEO Health Care	\$500,000	2011
Yang, Elaine C.	Los Angeles	Senior Physician	\$430,909	2009
Burgess, George	Miami- Dade County	County Manager	\$422,118.22	2009
Sliwinski, Philip	Milwaukee	Detective	\$376,995	2009
Hutchens, Sandra	Orange County	Sheriff/ Coroner	\$359,518	2010
Cuevas, Robert Jr.	Miami- Dade County	County Attorney	\$358,856.13	2009
Hinojosa, Eliu	Dallas Independent Schools	Superintendent	\$328,237	2011
Lindsey, Gina Marie	Los Angeles	Airports Chief	\$326,856	2011
McCarthy, Garry	Chicago	Superintendent of Police	\$310,000	2011

(Salary data obtained from 2011 public records requests and online sources. For government officials in Ca., Fl., Il., Mi., Pa., Tx., Wi.)

<sup>1</sup> "On average, governors' salaries show decline in pay," Stateline, April 27, 2010 (<http://www.stateline.org/live/details/story?contentId=565482>)

<sup>2</sup> Sliwinski was suspended in 2000 after being accused of taking drug money in an FBI investigation. He maintained his innocence and was reinstated 2009. A judge ordered the city to pay Sliwinski back pay, benefits and interest, which are included in this number.

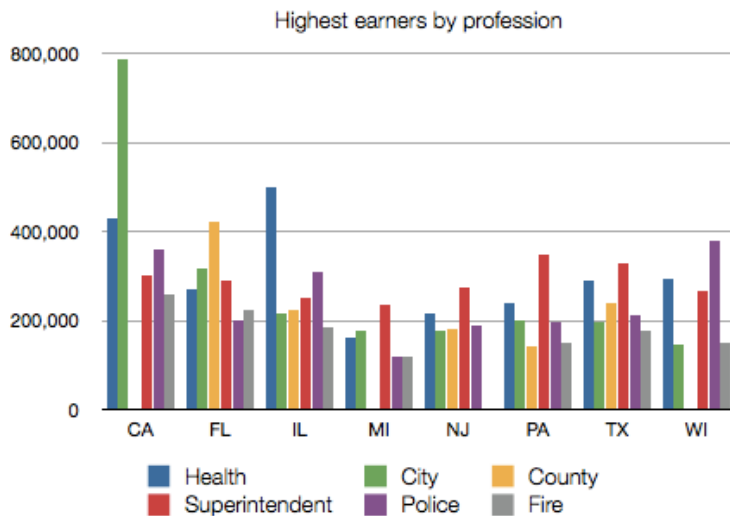
The highest paid official in the 8 states Sunshine Review examined between 2008-2011 is Robert Rizzo, the former city manager of Bell, California. In July 2010 when the Los Angeles Times discovered that Rizzo earned \$787,637 in one year<sup>3</sup>, or \$1.5 million when taking other government benefits into account, the ensuing public outrage led to several proactive disclosure initiatives. This includes California State Controller John Chiang mandating that local governments across the state report salary information to his office. His office posts this data on a searchable database.<sup>4</sup>

Following the high salaries in Bell, California, the next highest salary of the governments surveyed is the Chief Executive officer of Health Care in Cook County, Illinois. This individual earned \$500,000 in 2011. In the governments included in Sunshine Review's study, many public officials in medical positions earned high pay.

Three of the top eight salaries are related to law enforcement. These comprise a Sheriff-Coroner in California, a Superintendent of Police in Illinois, and a Detective in Wisconsin.

## What states were most responsive to public records requests?

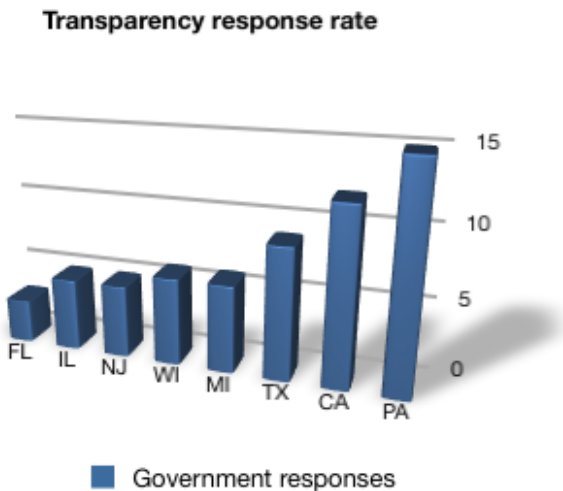
Public records requests were sent to 152 local government entities in 8 states. Of these local governments, Sunshine Review had a 40 percent response rate. The worst response rate came from Florida, which only had four fulfilled responses and two pending responses. This is in contradiction to the state's attitude towards proactive disclosure of information online. In 2010, Florida earned 20 Sunny Awards from Sunshine Review, more than any state in the



<sup>3</sup> "Bell city manager might be highest paid in nation: \$787,637 a year," *LA Times*, July 14, 2010 (<http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/lanow/2010/07/bell-city-manager-might-highest-paid-in-nation-787637-a-year.html>)

<sup>4</sup> Controller John Chiang, California State Controller website (<http://lgcr.sco.ca.gov/>)

country. Additionally, Florida was the source of the highest price tag for salary information, putting a \$22,000 price tag on a request in Miami-Dade County. The County later contacted Sunshine Review to negotiate the records request.



As of the beginning of 2012, two successful efforts at ascertaining public officials pay in Florida have been published. The Florida Times-Union has posted the salaries of workers in 90 government agencies in Northeast Florida.

Another salary disclosure project, FloridaOpenGov.com, includes more than a decade of salary information for 565 local Florida governments. According to this project, the highest paid state worker, Frank Brogan, took home more than half a million dollars in salary and benefits in 2010—more than President Obama.

The state with the quickest response rates was Pennsylvania. The 18 local governments

in the state also completely fulfilled each request.

## Recommendations

Sunshine Review recommends proactive disclosure of salary information. Local governments should ideally:

- Post government employee compensation data online. Salary data should be posted and maintained online by local governments and should include and be segregated by all forms of compensation, including benefits, overtime, and retirement pay.
- Post data clearly and in a usable format. Data for public employee salaries should be online in an easy to access, searchable, and downloadable platform.
- Make public records custodians visible. If citizens want specific information about public employee pay, they should have the resources to contact their local governments and ask for this information.

## Appendix A

State local employee salaries, top earners.

### California salaries

Name	City	Position	Salary	Year of most recent salary data
Rizzo, Robert	Bell	City Manager	\$787,637	2009
Yang, Elaine C.	Los Angeles	Senior Physician	\$430,909	2009
Hutchens, Sandra	Orange County	Sheriff/ Coroner	\$359,518	2010
Lindsey, Gina Marie	Los Angeles	Airports Chief	\$326,856	2011
Bratton, William J.	Los Angeles	Police Chief	\$307,291	2011
Brewer, David	Los Angeles Unified School District	Superintendent	\$300,000	2008
Cummings, Brian	Los Angeles	Fire Chief	\$260,000	2011

### Florida salaries

Name	City	Position	Salary	Year of most recent salary data
Burgess, George	Miami- Dade County	County Manager	\$422,118	2009
Cuevas, Robert Jr.	Miami- Dade County	County Attorney	\$358,856	2009
Alvarez, Carlos	Miami- Dade County	Mayor	\$315,462	2009
Notter, James	Broward County Public Schools	Superintendent	\$290,000	2010
Perper, Joshua	Broward County	Chief Medical Examiner	\$270,191	2009
Lorenzo, Herminio	Miami- Dade County	Fire Chief	\$225,010	2009
Loftus, James	Miami- Dade County	Director, Police Department	\$200,297	2009
Lamberti, Alfred	Broward County	Sheriff	\$170,313	2009

## Illinois salaries

Name	City	Position	Salary	Year of most recent salary data
Foley, William	Cook County	CEO Health Care	\$500,000	2011
McCarthy, Garry	Chicago	Superintendent of Police	\$310,000	2011
Robb, Nancy N.	Township High School District 211	Superintendent	\$250,877	2011
Brizzard, Jean-Claude	Chicago	CEO Chicago Public Schools	\$250,000	2011
Burton, Barry	Lake County	County Administrator	\$222,547	2011
Emmanuel, Rahm	Chicago	Mayor	\$216,210	2011
Hoff, Robert	Chicago	Fire Chief	\$185,652	2011
Preckwinle, Toni	Cook County	County President	\$170,000	2011
Zaruba, John	DuPage County	Sheriff	\$167,298	2011
County Commissioners	Cook County	Cook County Board of Commissioners	\$85,000	2011

## Michigan salaries

Name	City	Position	Salary	Year of most recent salary data
Johns, Christine	Utica Community Schools	Superintendent	\$235,033	2008
Bing, Dave	Detroit	Mayor	\$176,176	2011
Shobhana, Joshi	Wayne County	Community Health Psychiatrist	\$161,757	2007
Sundstrom, Gregory	Grand Rapids	City Manager	\$147,680	2011
Bouchard, Michael	Oakland County	Sheriff	\$138,999	2011
Belk, Kevin	Grand Rapids	Police Chief	\$117,364	2008
Vansolkema, Robert	Grand Rapids	Fire Chief	\$117,364	2008



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## New Jersey salaries

Name	City	Position	Salary	Year of most recent salary data
Janey, Clifford	Newark Public Schools	Superintendent	\$275,000	2011
White, Sadia	Newark Public Schools	Superintendent	\$275,000	2011
Clayton, Maryann	Bergen County	Medical Examiner	\$214,586	2011
Scott, Mildred	Middlesex County	Sheriff	\$188,000	2011
Townsend, Dana	Monmouth County	Corrections Officer	\$186,000	2009
Trawinski, Edward	Bergen County	County Administrator	\$180,000	2011
Pror, Stefan	Newark	Deputy Mayor for Economic Development	\$178,124	2009

## Pennsylvania salaries

Name	City	Position	Salary	Year of most recent salary data
Ackerman, Arlene	Philadelphia Schools	Superintendent (former)	\$348,140	2010
Gulino, Sam	Philadelphia	Medical Examiner	\$239,200	2011
Nutler, Michael	Philadelphia	Mayor	\$198,658	2011
Ramsey, Charles	Philadelphia	Police Commissioner	\$195,000	2011
Waske, Jerome	Pittsburgh	Paramedic Crew Chief	\$174,881	2009
Williams, Rufus	Philadelphia	District Attorney	\$163,602	2011
Ayers, Lloyd	Philadelphia Fire Department	Commissioner	\$149,968	2010
Verna, Anna	Philadelphia	City Council President	\$148,090	2011
Sanko, David	Bucks County	Chief Operating Officer	\$140,688	2011

## Texas salaries

Name	City	Position	Salary	Year of most recent salary data
Hinojosa, Eliu	Dallas Independent Schools	Superintendent	\$328,237	2011
Sanchez, Luis	Harris County	Chief Medical Examiner	\$289,308	2010
Marnius,G.K.	Tarrant County	County Administrator	\$239,455	2010
Persse, David	Houston	EMS Physician Director	\$238,254	2011
McClelland, Charles	Houston	Police Chief	\$211,150	2011
Digiovanni, Pat	San Antonio	Deputy City Manager	\$195,442	2011
Garrison, Terry	Houston	Fire Chief	\$175,000	2011
Garcia, Adrian	Harris County	Sheriff	\$174,221	2011

## Wisconsin salaries

Name	City	Position	Salary	Year of most recent salary data
Sliwinski, Philip	Milwaukee	Detective	\$376,995	2009
Bommakanti, Chandralekha	Brown County	Mental Health official	\$291,364	2010
Thornton, Gregory	Milwaukee Public Schools	District Administrator	\$265,000	2011
Peterson, Brian	Milwaukee County	DHHS Medical Forensic Director	\$222,700	2010
Grebner, Michael	Milwaukee County	Medical Director Detention Services	\$192,694	2010
Doro, Donald	Milwaukee	Deputy Fire Chief	\$150,512	2010
Flynn, Edward	Milwaukee	Police Chief	\$149,389	2009
Barrett, Tom	Milwaukee	Mayor	\$147,335	2011