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## Now hiring, your Uncle Sam

The Boston Globe

Many Americans are finding opportunity, and security, on the growing federal payroll



Pat Greenhouse, a former Boston Globe columnist, is now a senior advisor at the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston. (Pat Greenhouse/Globe Staff)

By Megan Woolhouse  
Globe Staff / May 30, 2009

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At a time when many companies are shedding jobs at an alarming rate to survive the recession, one employer is still hiring: the federal government.

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While the number of job openings in the private sector has dropped 4.6 percent since December 2007, hiring across federal agencies during the same time period has increased 2 percent, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

In some ways, the economic decline has been a boon to the federal government. Agencies are seeing a dramatic increase in applicants, including some with blockbuster resumes who are willing to work for lower salaries. Many say they will trade a smaller paycheck in exchange for job security and good benefits, while others say they are answering President Obama's call for public service.

Kate Bender left the corporate world behind this week to become an executive at the Federal Reserve Bank in Boston. Bender, who previously worked at Wachovia Bank and has two master's degrees, is earning less in her new position (she won't say how much), but is nonetheless enthusiastic about the career shift.

"I wanted to focus on something with more meaning," Bender said. "And while the pay might not be the same, the benefits are much better."

Michael Orenstein, a spokesman for the US Office of Personnel Management,

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said job openings are only expected to grow as baby boomers in the workforce retire and federal stimulus dollars create new positions.

The number of positions advertised on [www.usajobs.gov](http://www.usajobs.gov), a clearinghouse of federal job openings, has jumped 57 percent over the past two years to more than 47,000.

About 1,000 jobs within 100 miles of Boston were recently listed on the site, including postings for project managers at the Department of Housing and Urban Development, a "detention and removal assistant" at the federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement office, and a tractor operator for the Parks Service at Minuteman Park in Concord.

"The government has thousands and thousands of opportunities for qualified men and women," Orenstein said. "We're looking for new talent and energy and people who desire to be in public service versus kneeling at the altar of the bottom line."

For many, however, working for the government is a career change that comes out of economic necessity.

The Massachusetts unemployment rate climbed to 8 percent in April, and by the middle of next year, when the labor market is expected to bottom out, it is projected that the state will have lost more than 200,000 jobs as a result of the recession.

The federal government can expand even in a down economy because it has the authority to increase the national deficit, such as funding a \$787 billion economic stimulus package that will help create jobs. [Continued...](#)

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