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You Owe Taxes? So Do IRS Employees

If you owe back taxes, you might be mollified to know that 311,566 federal workers and retirees do too. Or maybe it will make you mad. The latest count showed they owed over \$3.5 billion in taxes in 2011 (up from \$3.4 billion in [2010](#)).

Every year the unhappy tally goes up: \$3.3 billion in [2009](#), \$3.0 billion in [2008](#), and \$2.7 billion in 2007. It can be a maddening number especially if you start looking department by department to see which agencies harbor the biggest tax debtors. In the past, the U.S. Office of Government Ethics was one of the worst.

This year, among large executive agencies, the Department of Housing and Urban Development had the highest percentage of delinquent workers at 4.4 percent. The Treasury Department, which includes the IRS, had the lowest, at 1.1 percent. Employees of the Board of Governors of the [Federal Reserve System](#) had a 5.6 percent delinquency rate.

Officials are quick to point out that federal employees are actually more compliant in paying taxes than the [U.S. population](#) as a whole. According to



IRS Form 1040 (Photo credit: bradleygee)

the IRS, 8.2 percent of the population was delinquent on their federal taxes at the end of 2011. That's up from 7.8 percent the year before.

The delinquency rate at the Executive Office of the President was 2.1 percent. The rates for employees of the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate were 3.7 percent and 3.3 percent, respectively. Overall, the 9.8 million workers included in the data had a delinquency rate of 3.2 percent.

That's better than the general public. Still, some people find it especially galling when federal employees owe back taxes. In the past, Rep. Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah) and Sen. Tom Coburn (R-Okla.) have [authored bills to force federal agencies, the U.S. Postal Service and congressional offices to fire employees](#) who purposely avoid paying taxes.

Exceptions would be made for employees suffering from family turmoil or working to correct significant financial hardship. Chaffetz's bill was approved by a committee, but Coburn's still awaits consideration by a Senate panel. See [Federal Employees Owe \\$1.03 billion In Unpaid Taxes](#).

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