

Oklahoma's Teacher Pay: 30th, Not 48th

By Byron Schlomach

Teacher pay in Oklahoma is higher than people think. That is the only possible conclusion when cost of living across the states is taken into account.

While it is true that Oklahoma ranks 48th in average teacher pay when raw numbers are compared, Oklahoma's low cost of living makes a difference when the spending power of teachers' salaries is compared. Only Mississippi has a lower cost of living than Oklahoma.

As shown in the table on back of this sheet, when average teacher salaries across the states are adjusted for cost of living, Oklahoma ranks 30th in teacher pay, well above Oregon, ranked at 47th. Oklahoma ranks considerably ahead of the two states that border us to the west, New Mexico and Colorado. Texas', Kansas', Arkansas' and Missouri's average teacher salaries rank higher than Oklahoma's even when cost of living is taken into account.

Even though Oregon's unadjusted average teacher salary (\$60,064), ranks 12th in the nation and is \$15,000 higher than Oklahoma's (\$44,921), the percentage difference is just 34 percent, not enough to make up for Oregon's much higher cost of living, which is 49 percent higher than that of Oklahoma.

In 2013, the average cost-of-living-adjusted salary of teachers in Oklahoma ranked below that of every bordering state, and Oklahoma also ranked 48th in average *unadjusted* teacher pay that year. Clearly, some progress

at the local level has been made in paying Oklahoma teachers.

The table also shows average salaries of beginning teachers across the states for 2013, unadjusted and adjusted for 2016 costs of living across the states. The 2013 data are the latest available. Though outdated, they indicate that Oklahoma does relatively well in paying beginning teachers, ranking 19th according to adjusted values and 43rd in the *unadjusted* values.

A \$5,000 pay raise for Oklahoma's teachers would place Oklahoma's unadjusted average two spots behind Texas, which currently ranks 25th in teacher pay unadjusted for cost of living. However, with cost of living taken into account Oklahoma would rank 15th, just behind Texas, and second highest among our bordering states. Georgia would be the only southern state besides Texas to outrank Oklahoma.

A \$4,000 pay raise would see Oklahoma paying more than every neighboring state except Texas on a cost-of-living basis. We would be 17th-highest in adjusted teacher pay.

Finally, it would take only a \$2,100 raise for Oklahoma to rank 24th among the states in cost-of-living adjusted teacher pay, moving us ahead of Maryland, California, Massachusetts, and neighboring Missouri.

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at www.1889institute.org/TeacherPay

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Note on Methodology: This analysis used a cost-of-living index calculated by the Missouri Economic Research and Information Center. The index has values ranging around 100, with 100 being the average cost of living in the nation as a whole. The index value for a state is that state's cost of living as a percentage of the national average. Adjusted average salary values are calculated thusly:

Adjusted Salary = Actual Salary / (Cost-of-living index / 100).

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
State	Rank Column B	2016 Average Salary Adjusted for 2016 Cost of Living	Rank Column D	2016 Average Salary	Rank Column F	Average 2013 Beginning Salary Adjusted for 2016 Cost of Living	Rank Column H	2013 Average Beginning Salary
Michigan	1	\$69,888	10	\$63,878	8	\$39,279	19	\$35,901
Illinois	2	\$63,765	11	\$61,342	10	\$38,634	16	\$37,166
Pennsylvania	3	\$62,976	9	\$64,991	4	\$40,602	7	\$41,901
Wyoming	4	\$62,784	16	\$57,761	1	\$47,032	4	\$43,269
Ohio	5	\$60,787	20	\$56,410	20	\$35,664	33	\$33,096
Georgia	6	\$59,549	23	\$54,190	15	\$36,993	28	\$33,664
Iowa	7	\$59,406	22	\$54,416	18	\$36,273	32	\$33,226
Indiana	8	\$58,026	30	\$50,715	7	\$39,698	24	\$34,696
Delaware	9	\$57,700	13	\$59,085	11	\$38,416	11	\$39,338
New Jersey	10	\$57,631	5	\$69,330	6	\$40,425	1	\$48,631
New York	11	\$57,597	1	\$77,987	38	\$32,377	3	\$43,839
Minnesota	12	\$57,311	19	\$56,910	24	\$34,748	25	\$34,505
Kentucky	13	\$57,216	26	\$51,666	9	\$38,944	23	\$35,166
Texas	14	\$56,877	25	\$51,758	2	\$41,858	14	\$38,091
Nebraska	15	\$56,568	27	\$51,364	26	\$33,969	46	\$30,844
Alabama	16	\$55,683	34	\$49,781	5	\$40,490	18	\$36,198
Wisconsin	17	\$55,600	21	\$54,766	25	\$34,057	30	\$33,546
Connecticut	18	\$54,638	4	\$72,013	37	\$32,568	6	\$42,924
Kansas	19	\$54,542	36	\$49,197	14	\$37,013	31	\$33,386
Tennessee	20	\$54,422	37	\$48,708	12	\$38,098	27	\$34,098
Rhode Island	21	\$54,388	8	\$65,918	39	\$32,340	12	\$39,196
Arkansas	22	\$54,180	39	\$48,220	16	\$36,731	35	\$32,691
Nevada	23	\$53,821	18	\$56,943	30	\$33,420	21	\$35,358
Maryland	24	\$53,485	7	\$66,482	23	\$34,783	5	\$43,235
California	25	\$53,482	3	\$72,842	42	\$30,293	8	\$41,259
Missouri	26	\$52,581	41	\$47,849	33	\$33,037	48	\$30,064
Massachusetts	27	\$52,475	2	\$76,981	47	\$27,676	10	\$40,600
North Dakota	28	\$51,578	31	\$50,237	34	\$32,874	39	\$32,019
North Carolina	29	\$51,157	40	\$47,985	35	\$32,812	47	\$30,778
Oklahoma	30	\$51,105	48	\$44,921	19	\$35,957	43	\$31,606
Virginia	31	\$50,885	29	\$50,834	13	\$37,886	15	\$37,848
Alaska	32	\$50,785	6	\$67,443	32	\$33,258	2	\$44,166
Montana	33	\$50,408	28	\$51,215	48	\$26,844	50	\$27,274
Mississippi	34	\$50,110	49	\$42,744	17	\$36,558	44	\$31,184
New Hampshire	35	\$50,087	15	\$58,802	44	\$29,199	26	\$34,280
New Mexico	36	\$49,908	42	\$47,163	27	\$33,820	40	\$31,960
Louisiana	37	\$49,716	43	\$46,733	3	\$41,122	13	\$38,655
Florida	38	\$49,646	35	\$49,199	22	\$35,485	22	\$35,166
Utah	39	\$49,454	44	\$46,042	21	\$35,533	34	\$33,081
Idaho	40	\$49,091	47	\$45,409	28	\$33,685	45	\$31,159
Washington	41	\$48,378	24	\$52,539	29	\$33,458	17	\$36,335
South Carolina	42	\$48,252	38	\$48,542	40	\$32,113	37	\$32,306
Colorado	43	\$47,884	33	\$50,039	41	\$30,743	38	\$32,126
Vermont	44	\$47,463	14	\$58,901	45	\$28,639	20	\$35,541
West Virginia	45	\$47,011	45	\$45,977	31	\$33,265	36	\$32,533
Arizona	46	\$46,500	46	\$45,477	36	\$32,591	41	\$31,874
Oregon	47	\$45,991	12	\$60,064	49	\$25,688	29	\$33,549
Maine	48	\$45,129	32	\$50,229	46	\$28,603	42	\$31,835
South Dakota	49	\$41,486	50	\$42,025	43	\$29,468	49	\$29,851
Hawaii	50	\$29,788	17	\$57,431	50	\$21,280	9	\$41,027

Sources:

https://www.missourieconomy.org/indicators/cost_of_living/

<http://www.nea.org/home/66703.htm>

<http://www.teacherportal.com/teacher-salaries-by-state/>

Note: The U.S. average teacher pay is \$56,383.