

Fauquier joins ranks of highest-earning counties in nation

Federal government largesse benefits Washington suburbs

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John Stewart

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Fauquier County jumped to eighth place in the U.S. Census Bureau's annual ranking of the highest-income communities in 2011.

Five Virginia counties and two in Maryland, all suburbs of the nation's capital, made it onto the top 10 highest-earnings list, according to the 2011 American Community Survey released Thursday. Loudoun, Fairfax and Arlington counties occupied the first through third spots, respectively on the annual ranking, with Arlington, alone among the three to have moved from its previous spot in 2010.

The average Loudoun County income, according to the U.S. Census, was \$119,134, while in Fairfax the average income was \$105,797.

Arlington went from fifth to third place with an average income of \$100,735. Nearby Prince William County rose from ninth place to seventh with an average income of \$95,146.

Fauquier County experienced a surprising jump from 2010's 16th-place spot to eighth, with an average income

of \$93,762 in 2011. John Stewart, president of Vantage Economics in Catlett, said Fauquier's jump to eighth place was surprising, given the decline in federal employment across the nation.

"For Fauquier County, that's a pretty sizable change," Stewart said.

Prince William County's more modest move up the ranking was less surprising, given that the housing market began recovering there ahead of surrounding communities, indicating a quicker improving economy.

Still, all seven bedroom communities benefited from close proximity to D.C.

According to Stewart, overall government employment has been contracting across all three sectors — federal, state and local — but other areas of the country are seeing greater declines

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2011 Top 10 Highest Income Counties in U.S.

2011	2010	County	Income
1	1	Loudoun County, Va.	\$119,134
2	2	Fairfax County, Va.	\$105,797
3	5	Arlington County, Va.	\$100,735
4	4	Hunterdon County, N.J.	\$99,099
5	3	Howard County, Md.	\$98,053
6	8	Somerset County, N.J.	\$96,360
7	9	Prince William County, Va.	\$95,146
8	16	Fauquier County, Va.	\$93,762
9	6	Douglas County, Colo.	\$93,573
10	12	Montgomery County, Md.	\$92,909

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

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than the Washington, D.C., region. Relative to other parts of the nation, the Washington area appears stronger, based on the stable employment picture.

"Nationally, all levels of government fell in 2011, but when we look locally, total employment grew in 2011," Stewart said.

"So that means the hub of D.C. is still helping local economies, which might explain the relative change," he said.

Whether Fauquier and other

BY THE NUMBERS

\$93,762

Average income for Fauquier County residents, according to 2011 U.S. Census data

Virginia counties can hold onto their spots among the Top 10 highest earners is questionable, given coming federal budget cuts. Federal contractors, accord-

ing to Stewart, believe that cuts in some form are coming, even if they dodge the bullet from the coming sequestration due in Jan. 2 should Congress fail to address the issue.

"They are extremely nervous as to what the implications will be," Stewart said.

Many companies are trying to transition to private sector applications and market and sell those products and services to non-government customers.

"Because even if sequestration doesn't happen, they know that cuts are coming," Stewart said.

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