



# Off-Beat Humor: The Federal Employee As A Comedian

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What do federal employees do for fun? Some are young, thin, energetic and [climb big rocks](#), and anyone walking or driving around Washington, DC on a weekend will see plenty of federal employees riding bikes or jogging or going to movies or plays.

But here is a different type of off-duty hobby. If you are a federal employee and think you have a gift for comedy, now is your chance to prove how funny you can be in front of an audience and not just the center of attention at those boring, long-winded staff meetings where you may be displaying your comedic talents before a bored audience looking for a little relief.

"Funny feds" sounds like an oxymoron. The stereotypical image of federal employees is sometimes an unsmiling, slightly overweight, middle-aged person sitting behind a desk with a line of people waiting to buy stamps, ask a question about a Social Security issue or file for veterans benefits. In other words, the people who are most often associated with being federal employees are those who are in the public eye and those whom the public sees every day.

But a former federal employee had a brainstorm. In a nutshell, federal employees as comedians. Naomi Johnson is young but is now a former federal employee. She started working for Uncle Sam workforce in 1998 as a [Presidential Management Fellow](#). Naomi worked as an organizational consultant at the [HHS](#) and as an HR Policy Specialist at the [Dept. of State](#).

Her career has obviously taken a different turn. She's now recruiting federal employees to try their hand at being a comic. And, despite the unfair stereotypical image, there are apparently a number of federal employees in the Washington, DC area who want to see if they can make people laugh using their federal career as a treasure trove of comedic episodes. And it isn't just one agency that is providing the talent. A look at recent contest winners shows a wide variety of participants from a wide range of federal agencies: CMS, CDC, Energy, US Marines, Air National Guard, U.S. Senate, DOD, DOJ, DOL, DOT, DOI, Treasury, Commerce, EPA, GAO, Consumer Product Safety Commission, DHS, FEMA, Census Bureau and CFTC.

Many readers will recognize the federal background from some of the most successful participants. Successful comedians obviously use their own experience as a source of material and, if you work for Uncle Sam, where better to find the source for displaying your comedic talent?

Comedian Marshal Henry, for example, says he works for a non-profit organization: The Department of the Treasury where they make a penny at a cost of two cents per coin. And Joey Marento says that federal employees are not hard at work when they visit each other's offices: they are trick or treating because of all the candy bowls on desks in federal offices. Check it out for yourself [with these video clips](#).

The contest ends on June 22nd and federal employees will recognize the unique nature of some of the [contest rules](#). No official government time can be used for writing material or filling out the application and comments made during the contest do not represent the interests of the federal agency in which the would-be comedian works.

Some of the contest judges may sound familiar to federal employees. Mike Causey, well-known as a writer and observer of the federal scene lends his opinion to the event and Lara Shane, VP for the Partnership for Public Service also participates as a judge--along with a few others who do comedy for a living or as a profession.

If you are funny enough to win, what is the prize? A check for \$250, the notoriety of being designated as the "Funniest Fed" and a guest spot at the comedy lounge for the Arlington (Virginia) [Cinema Drafthouse](#).

Enjoy the show--and congratulations to those participants who work for Uncle Sam and