

**Comparing West Virginia Teacher Salaries with Comparable Occupations
and Possible Alternatives for Improvement**

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Comparing West Virginia Teacher Salaries with Comparable Occupations and Possible Alternatives for Improvement

This report provides information comparing teacher salaries with other occupations requiring similar education and training. While relying on different statistical techniques and data sources, this report is an extension of a national report prepared by the Economic Policy Institute (EPI) entitled *The Teaching Penalty* (2008), which concluded that teachers were paid less than those in comparable professions, and the gap was growing.

The Center for Business and Economic Research at Marshall University (CBER) used two approaches in the comparison of teacher salaries and similar professions.

- *Comparison with other occupations requiring a college degree* is provided in the first set of tables. This is the approach used in the 2008 Economic Policy Institute report. The data is included for the U.S., West Virginia and its surrounding states as provided by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics for May 2007. Only wages are included in this examination. For the comparison with other occupations to be more precise, adjustments must be made for benefits, time worked and certification requirements. The most recent data shows WV continues to lag behind in salaries compared to the national average and competing states.

A consideration in these comparisons should be on specific teaching fields. Some fields such as science and mathematics provide potentially lucrative options outside of teaching. For other teaching fields much fewer options are available in the market. Increasing the salaries of all teachers regardless of field will do nothing to address the problem of critical shortages in high demand specialties currently impacting several districts in West Virginia.

- *Comparisons with salaries paid to other state employees requiring similar training and experience* with similar occupations in other states. For the occupations studied, West Virginia pays its state workforce considerably less than it could be earned in surrounding states. As is the case with teaching occupations, the state pay scales (across the board) are well below the national average for those occupations. For this comparison CBER has used a 2008 report by the American Federation of Teachers which was based on a survey in all fifty states.

These comparisons only concern salaries and do not include benefits or other forms of compensation.

Comparison of West Virginia Teacher's Salaries with those in Similar Occupations

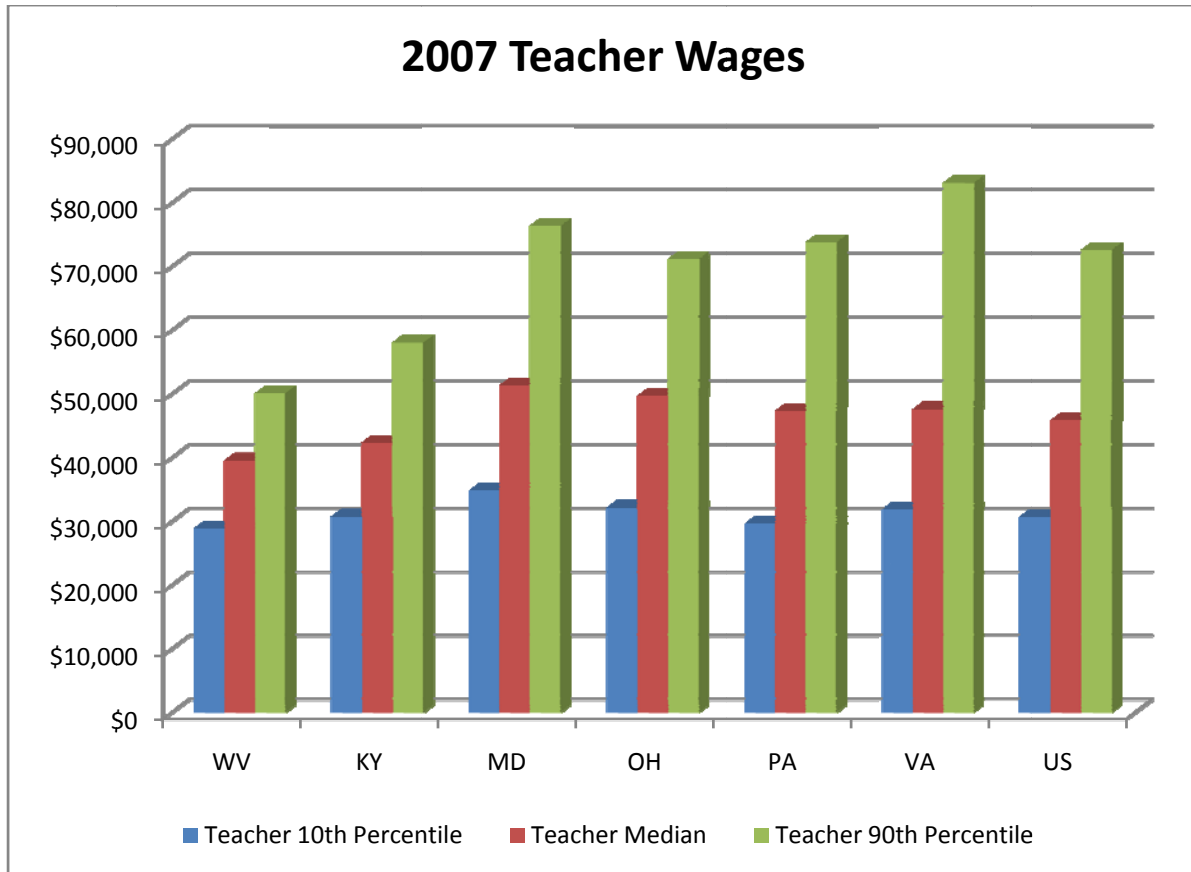
The 2008 EPI report defined a teacher as: Preschool teachers, except special education; Kindergarten teachers, except special education; Elementary school teachers, except special education; Middle school teachers, except special and vocational education; Secondary school teachers, except special and vocational education; Vocational education teachers, secondary

school; Special education teachers, preschool, kindergarten, and elementary school; Special education teachers, middle school; and Special education teachers, secondary school.

Educationally similar occupations were identified in a 2004 EPI report *How Does Teacher Pay Compare? Methodological Challenges and Answers* by Allegretto, Corcoran, and Mishel. These occupations include: **Accountants and auditors**; Underwriters; **Personnel-Training and Labor Relations Specialists**; Inspectors and Compliance Officers (except construction); Architects; Forestry and Conservation Scientists; **Registered Nurses**; Occupational Therapists; Physical Therapists; Trade and Industrial Teachers; Vocational and Educational Counselors; Archivists and Curators; **Clergy**; Technical Writers; **Editors and Reporters**; and **Computer Programmers**.

Occupations in bold type represent those measured by the 2008 EPI report as sufficient data was not available for the remaining ten occupations.

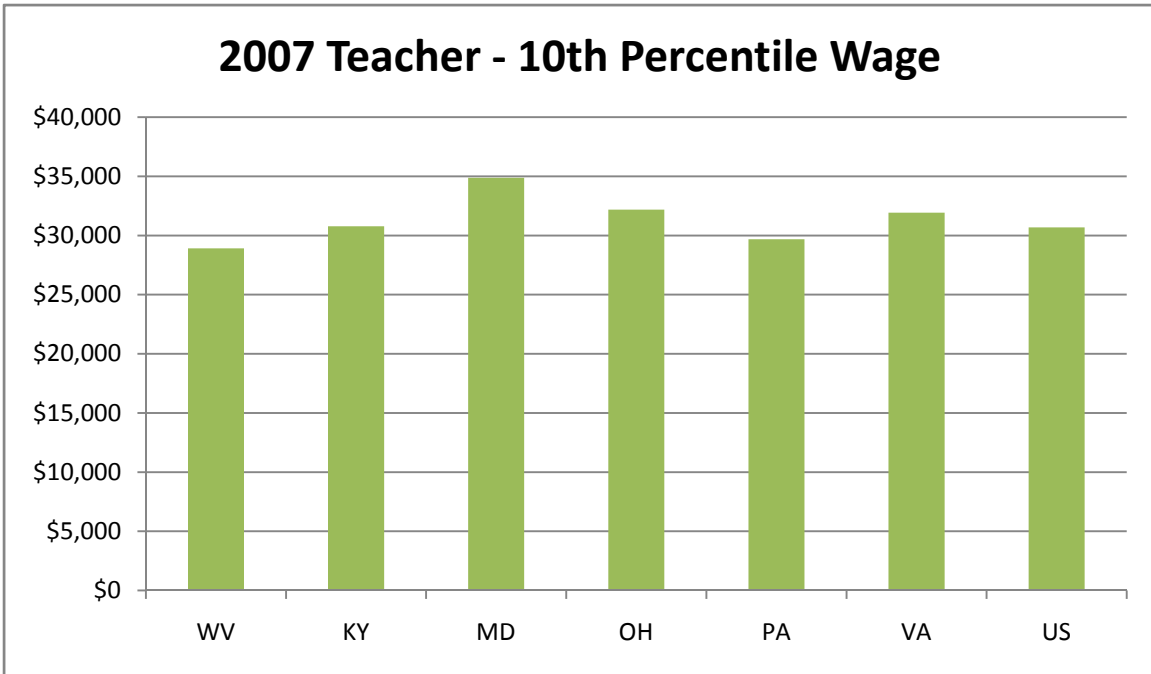
For this CBER report, wages (without benefits) were taken from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics report of May 2007. For comparison purposes salaries in the 10th percentile were used to represent entry level teachers and comparable occupations, the median salary was used to represent mid-career teachers and comparable occupations, and the 90th percentile to represent more highly-educated and experienced educators and comparable occupations.



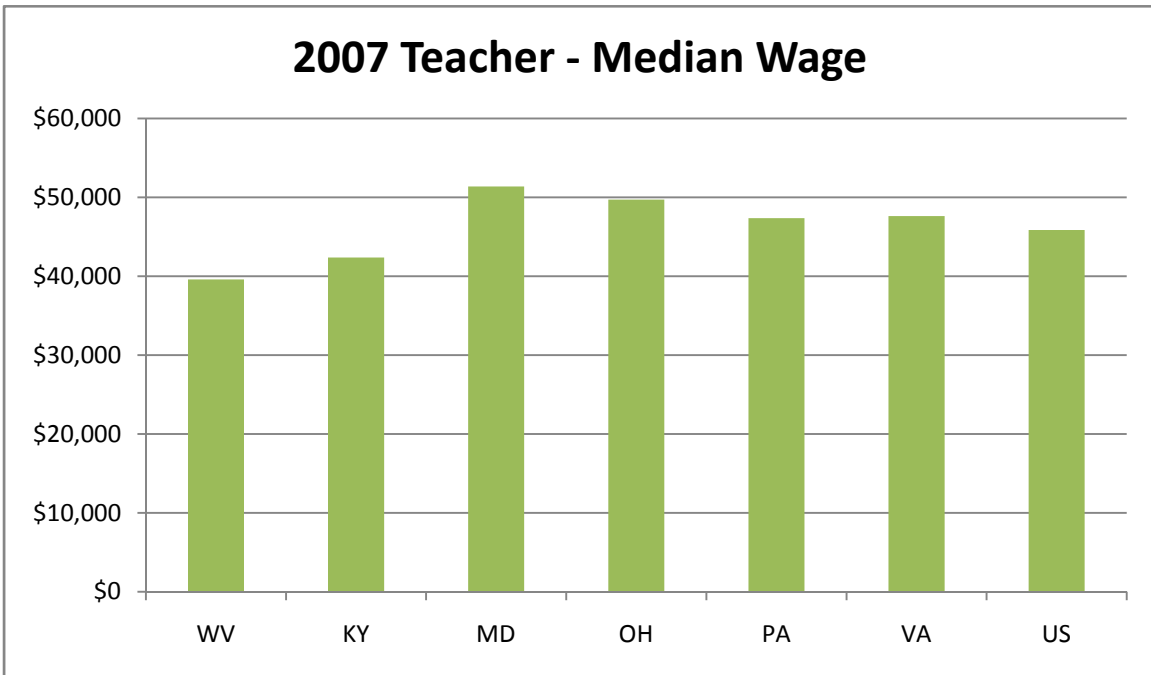
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics May 2007 Occupational Wage Estimates Series Data

This graph comparing teacher wages, and the three figures which follow, show two striking indications. First, when compared to surrounding states and the US average, West Virginia teachers at the three levels are paid less by significant amounts. Second, the greatest disparity exists for the more experienced/educated teachers.

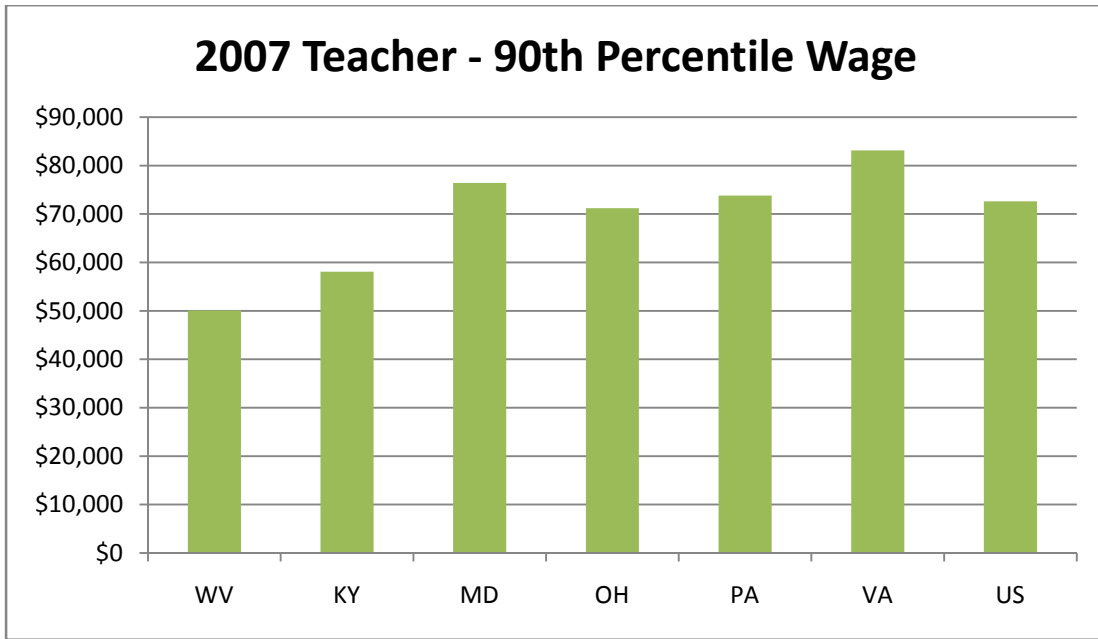
The next three figures illustrate the wages paid in WV, the U.S., and surrounding states for the 10th, median and 90th percentile levels.



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics May 2007 Occupational Wage Estimates Series Data



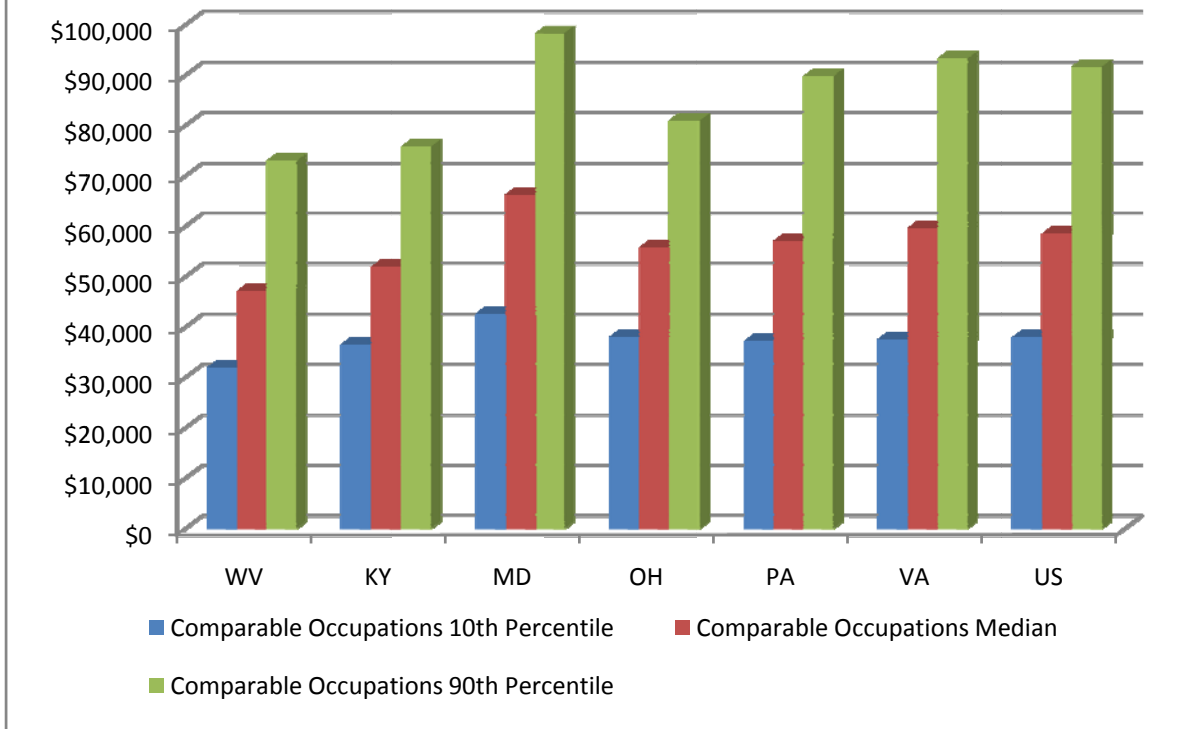
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics May 2007 Occupational Wage Estimates Series Data



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics May 2007 Occupational Wage Estimates Series Data

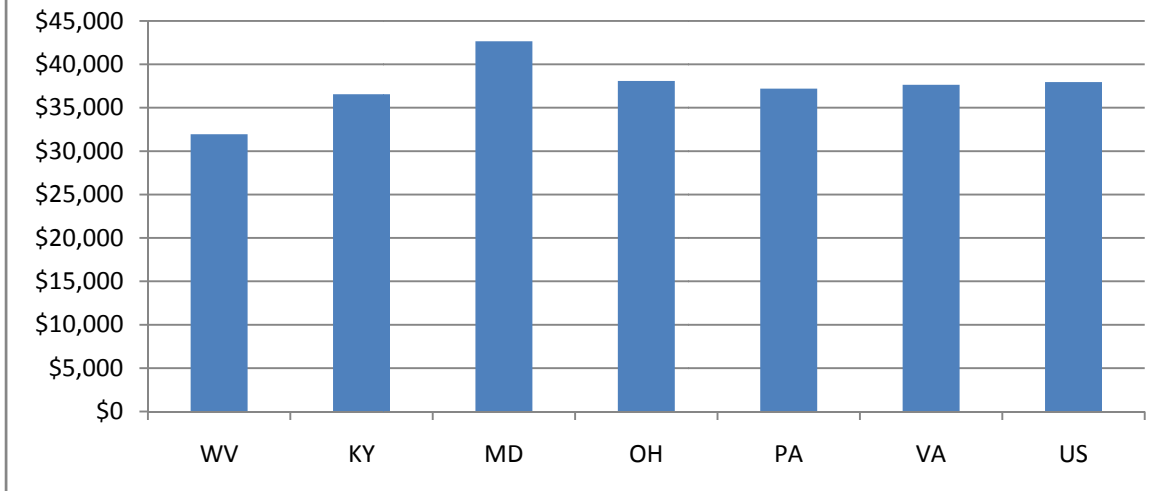
In the charts which follow, the salaries of West Virginia teachers are contrasted with those in similar occupations. The interpretation is obvious; teachers are paid less than individuals holding jobs requiring similar education and training. Again the results are shown by percentile for the comparative occupations.

2007 Comparable Occupation Wages

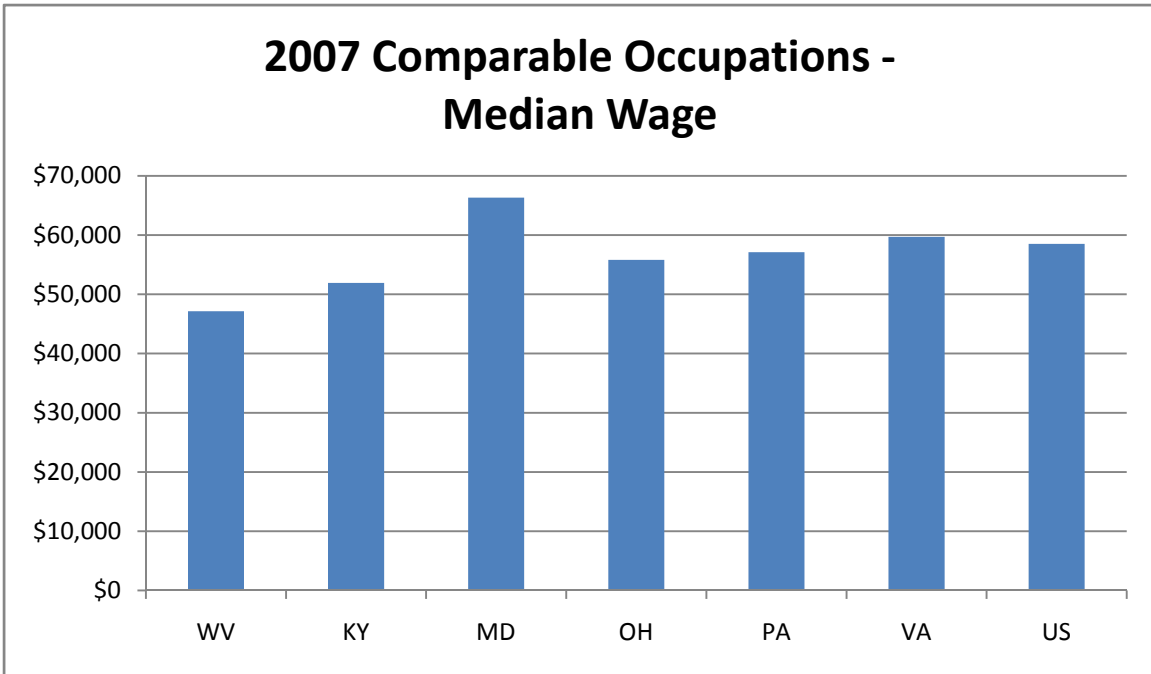


Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics May 2007 Occupational Wage Estimates Series Data

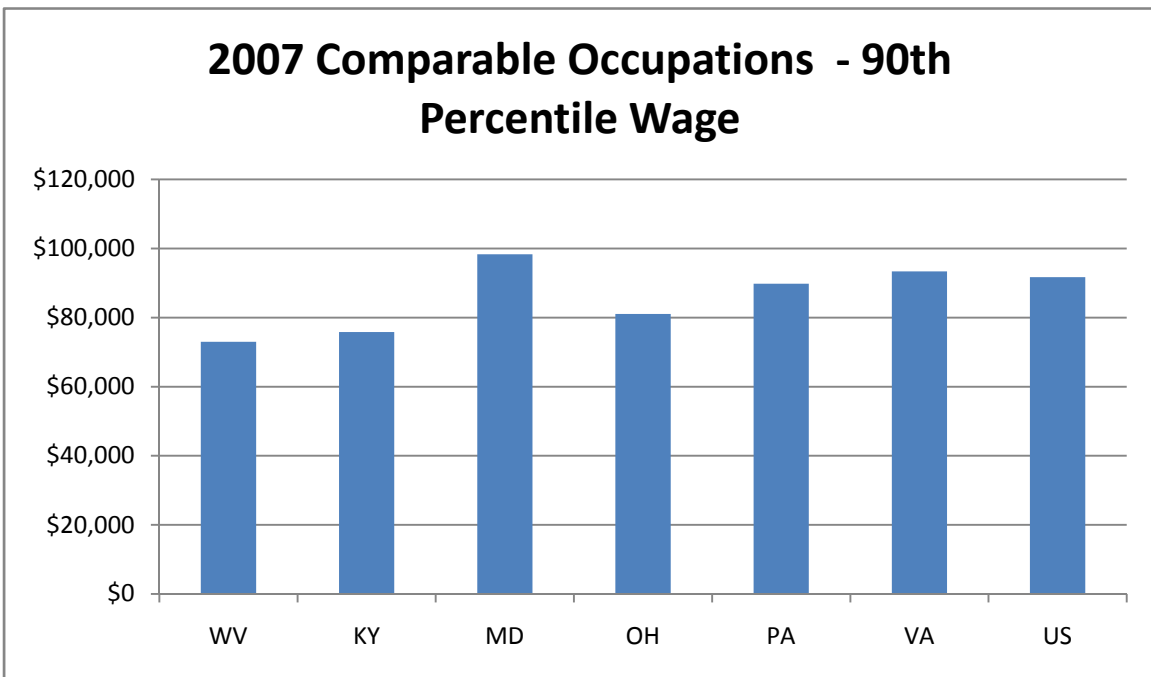
2007 Comparable Occupations - 10th Percentile Wage



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics May 2007 Occupational Wage Estimates Series Data

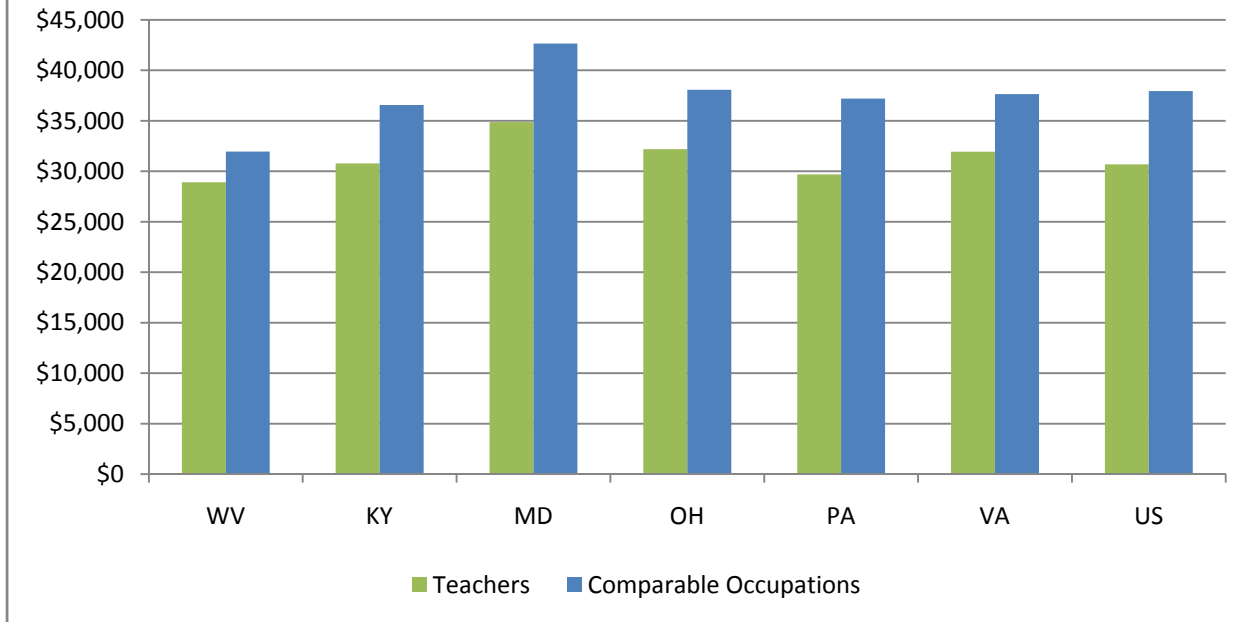


Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics May 2007 Occupational Wage Estimates Series Data



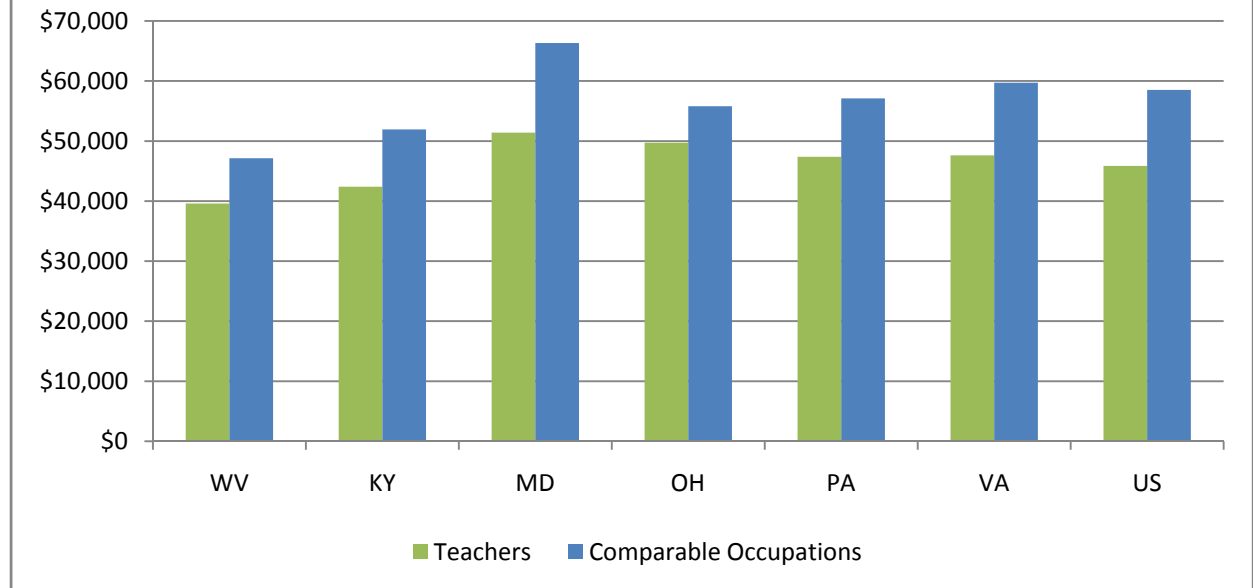
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics May 2007 Occupational Wage Estimates Series Data

2007 Teacher and Comparable Occupation Wages -10th Percentile

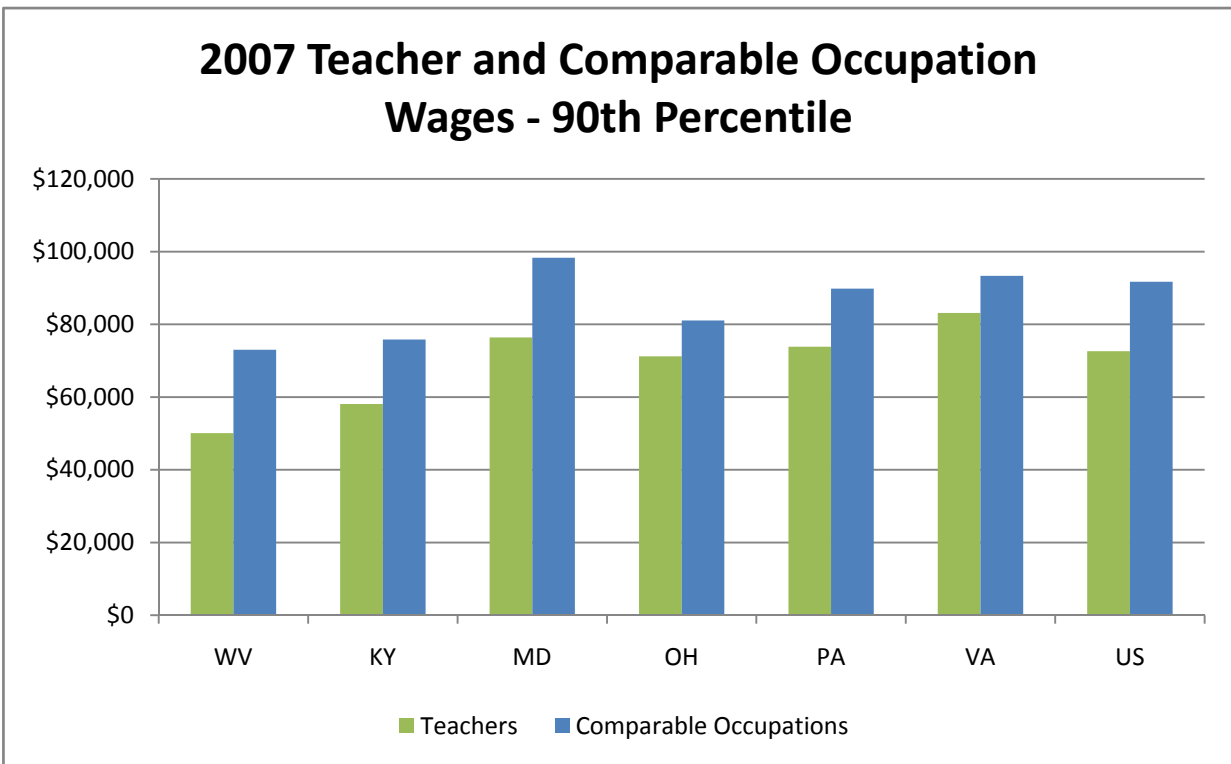


Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics May 2007 Occupational Wage Estimates Series Data

2007 Teacher and Comparable Occupation Wages - Median



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics May 2007 Occupational Wage Estimates Series Data



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics May 2007 Occupational Wage Estimates Series Data

The table following shows the number of individuals employed in each state and in each occupation.

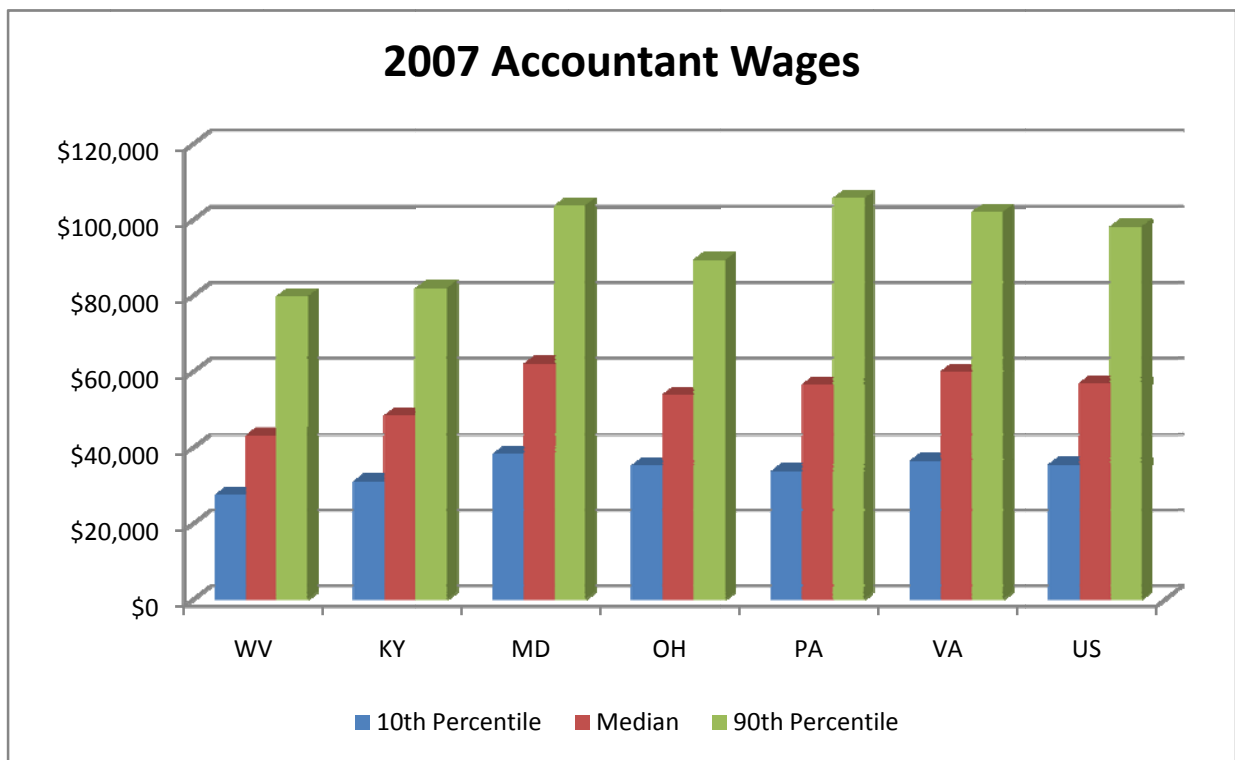
2007 Employment by Comparable Occupation

Occupation	WV	KY	MD	OH	PA	VA	US
Accountants and auditors	4,540	9,790	22,180	41,410	50,150	33,900	1,115,010
Underwriters	380	490	1,820	4,920	5,210	2,480	98,920
Personnel-Training and Labor Relations Specialists	1,420	2,820	5,060	13,100	10,070	10,180	211,770
Inspectors and Compliance Officers (except construction)	1,130	2,680	5,510	6,820	7,420	6,960	231,910
Architects	70	910	2,200	3,090	4,310	3,480	106,830
Forestry and Conservation Scientists	220	**	30	160	450	260	10,510
Registered Nurses	16,970	39,120	48,840	114,920	126,370	57,740	2,468,340
Occupational Therapists	540	1,090	2,020	3,830	5,670	1,970	91,920
Physical Therapists	1,040	1,810	3,950	6,650	8,790	3,670	161,850
Trade and Industrial Teachers	690	2,960	**	3,280	5,240	2,410	112,300
Vocational and Educational Counselors	1,620	2,710	5,240	8,350	12,480	6,250	232,260
Archivists and Curators	30	120	120	280	520	340	10,120
Clergy	340	330	290	1,360	1,580	800	40,960
Technical Writers	70	480	1,900	1,320	1,610	2,560	46,740
Editors and Reporters	220	750	2,500	3,620	50	3,050	105,920
Computer Programmers	1,060	2,630	9,030	14,270	19,030	14,880	394,710

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics May 2007 Occupational Wage Estimates Series Data

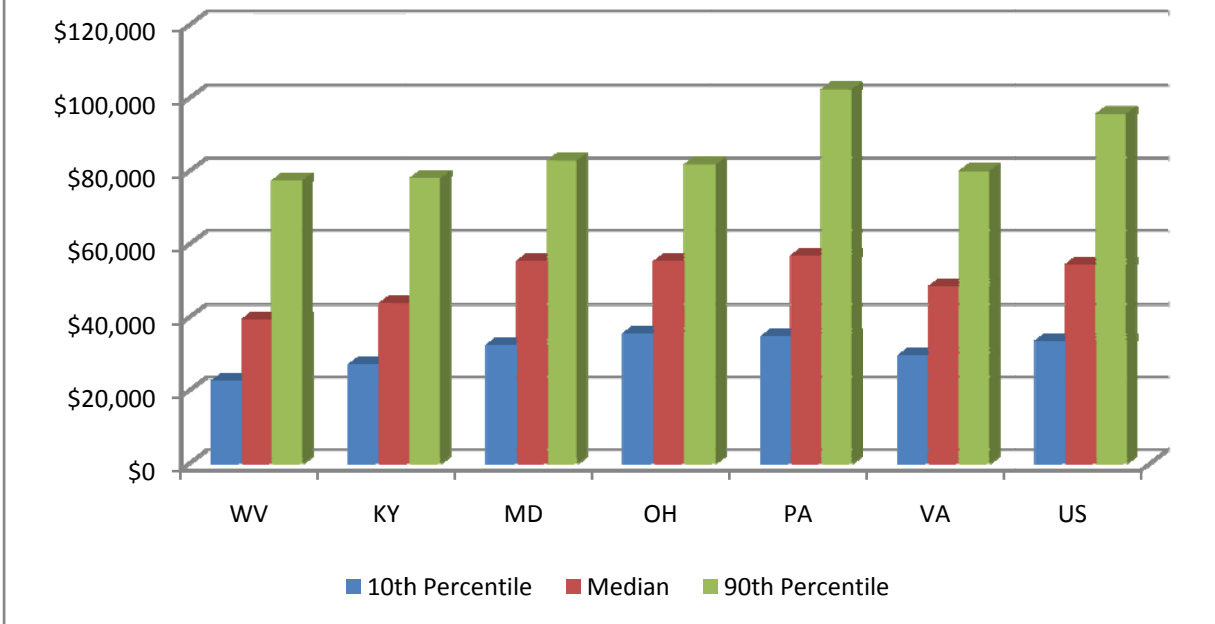
** Estimate Unavailable

The next series of graphs contrast the salaries paid in West Virginia with the comparable salaries paid at the various percentile levels for each comparative occupation. In almost all cases the remuneration received for those occupations, as is the case with teachers, in West Virginia is below what is paid on average in the U.S. and in surrounding states. In some cases the difference is slight and in others large. There are exceptions to the rule that “West Virginians are paid less” in occupations such as architects, foresters, occupational therapists, physical therapists curators and clergy. In many of these exceptions the reason may be the small number included in the Bureau of Labor Statistics sample.



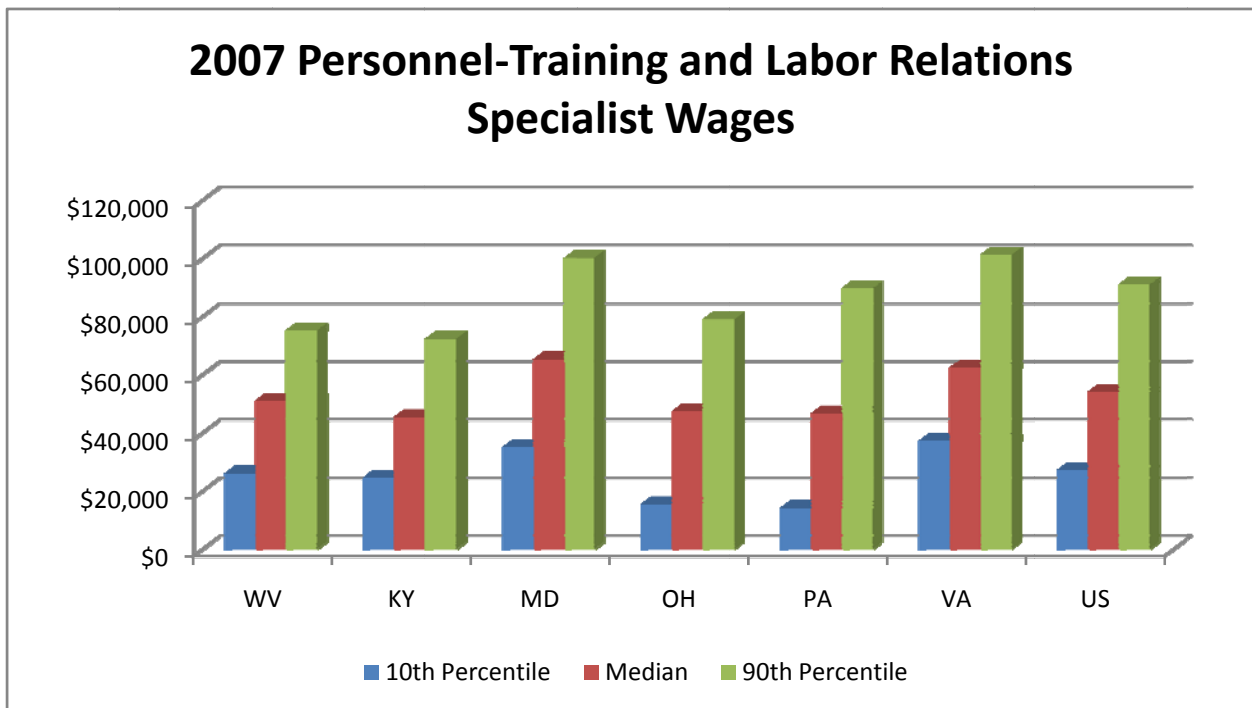
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics May 2007 Occupational Wage Estimates Series Data

2007 Insurance Underwriter Wages



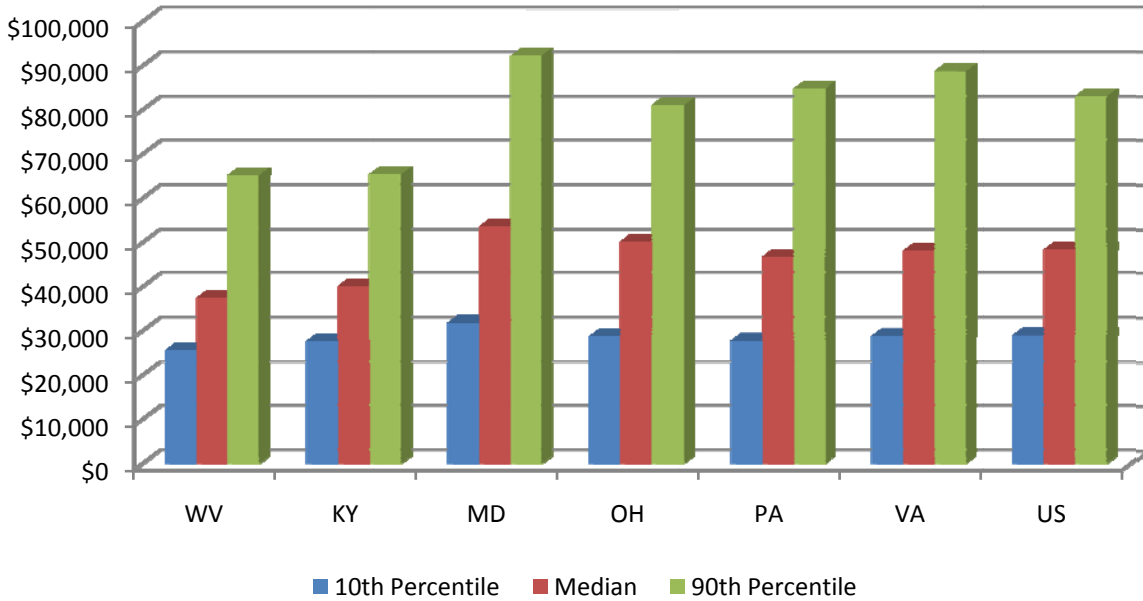
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics May 2007 Occupational Wage Estimates Series Data

2007 Personnel-Training and Labor Relations Specialist Wages



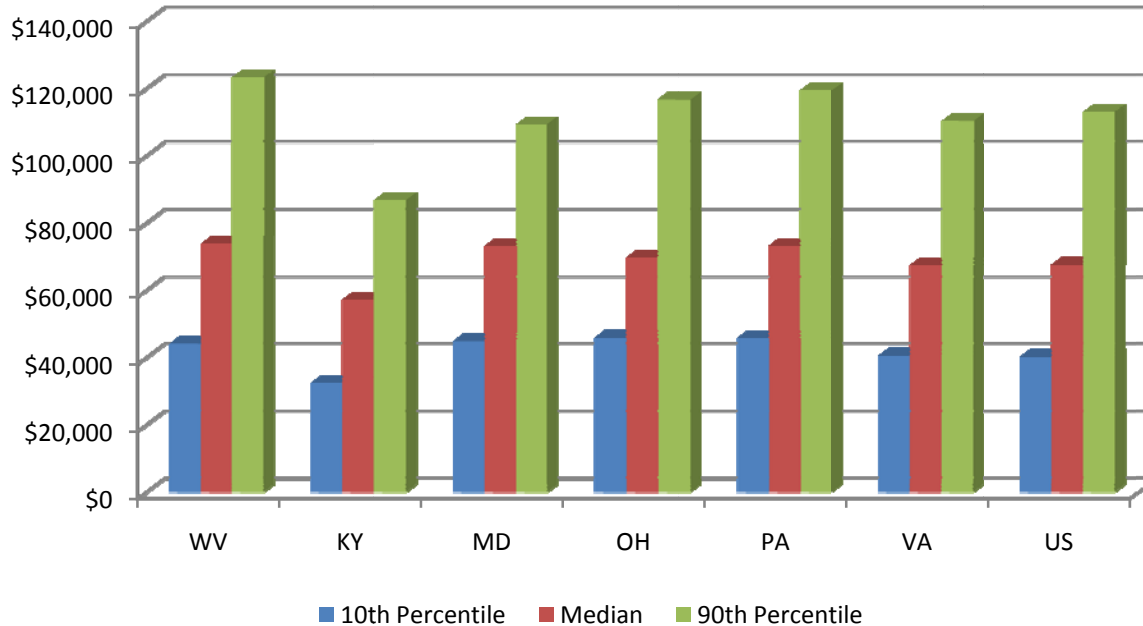
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics May 2007 Occupational Wage Estimates Series Data

2007 Compliance Officer Wages



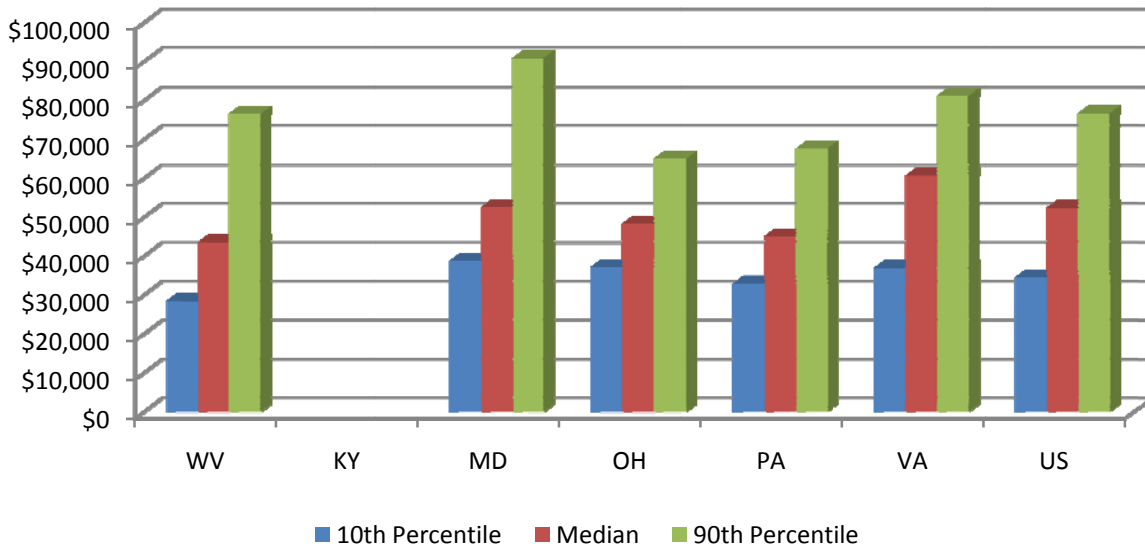
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics May 2007 Occupational Wage Estimates Series Data

2007 Architect Wages



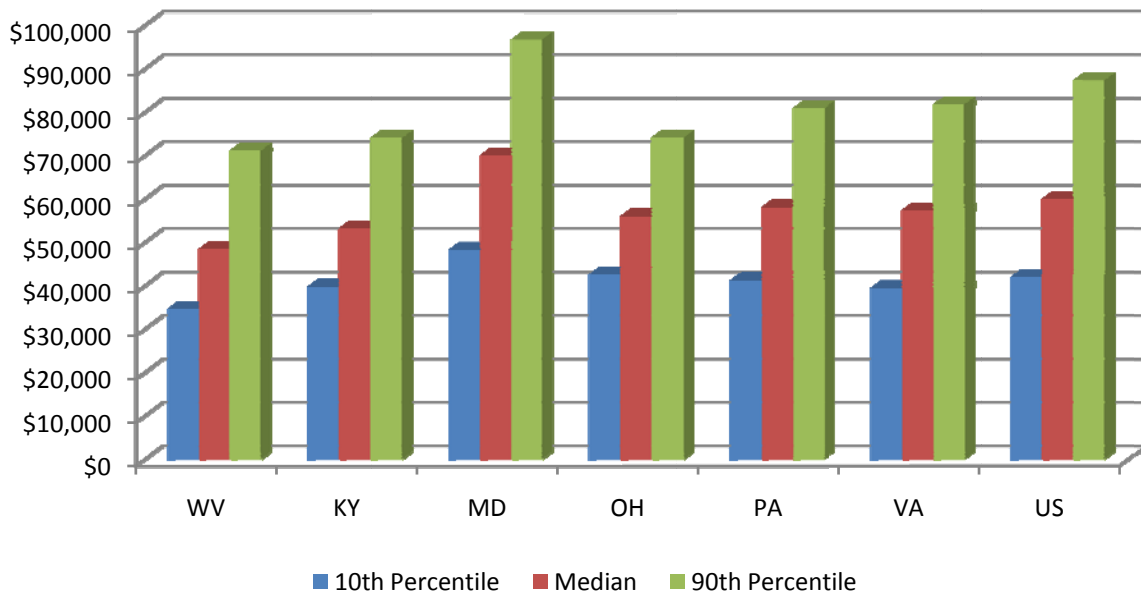
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics May 2007 Occupational Wage Estimates Series Data

2007 Forester Wages



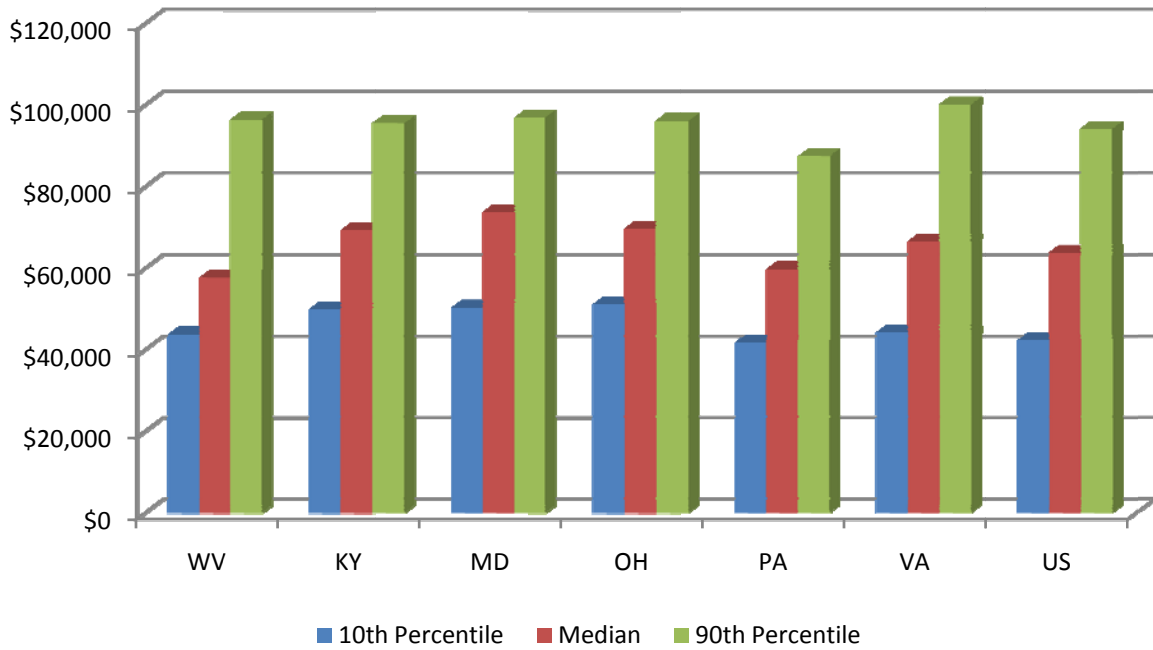
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics May 2007 Occupational Wage Estimates Series Data
 ** No data reported for Foresters for Kentucky in the May 2007 Report.

2007 Registered Nurse Wages



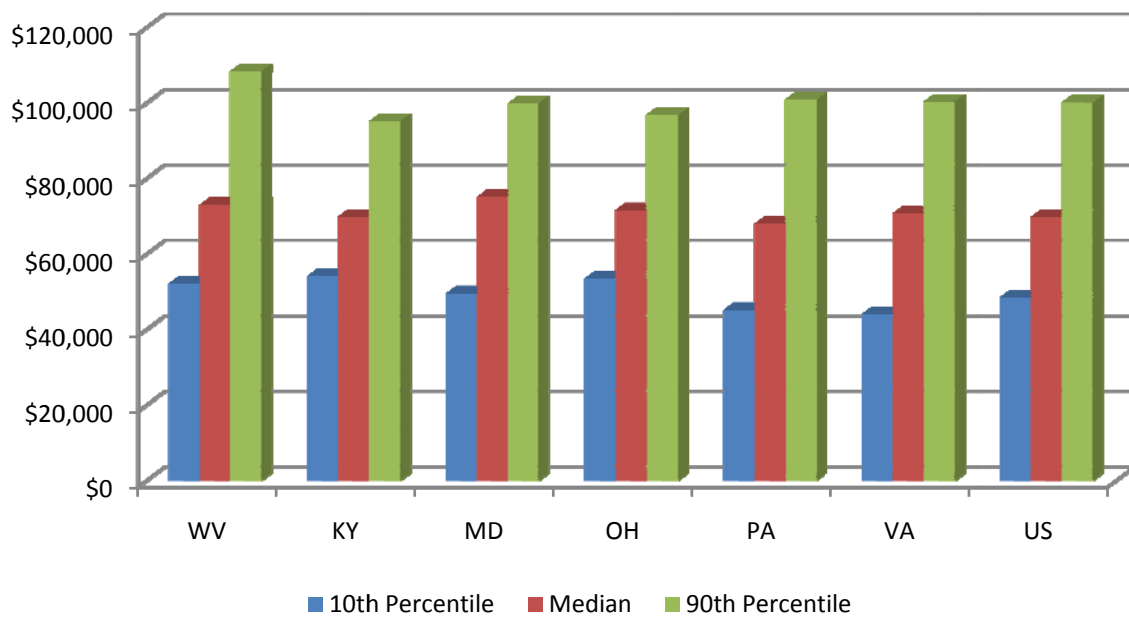
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics May 2007 Occupational Wage Estimates Series Data

2007 Occupation Therapist Wages



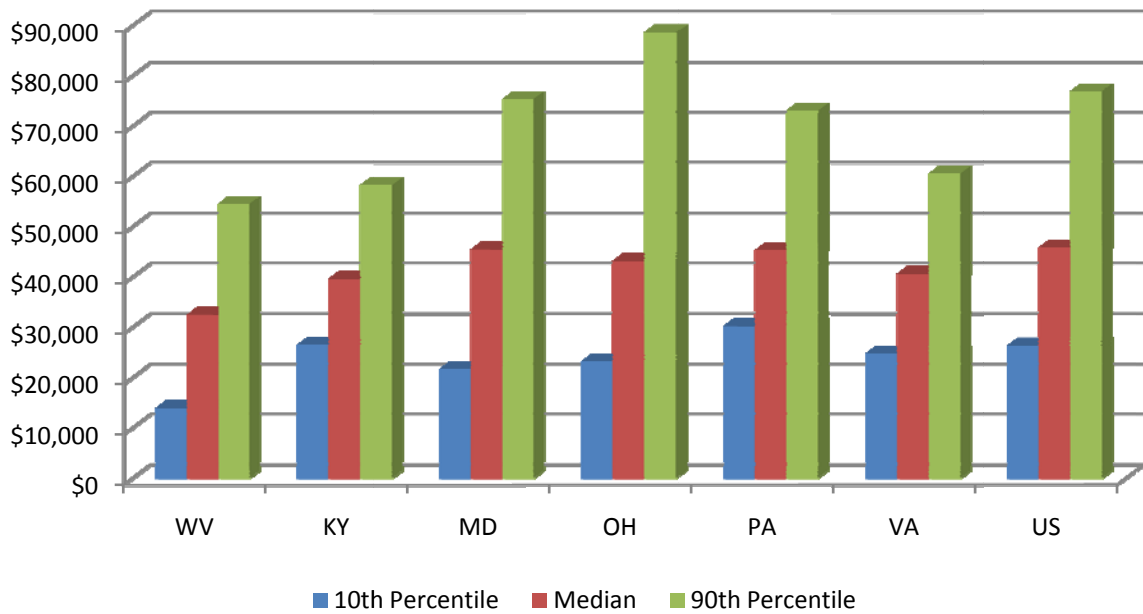
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics May 2007 Occupational Wage Estimates Series Data

2007 Physical Therapist Wages



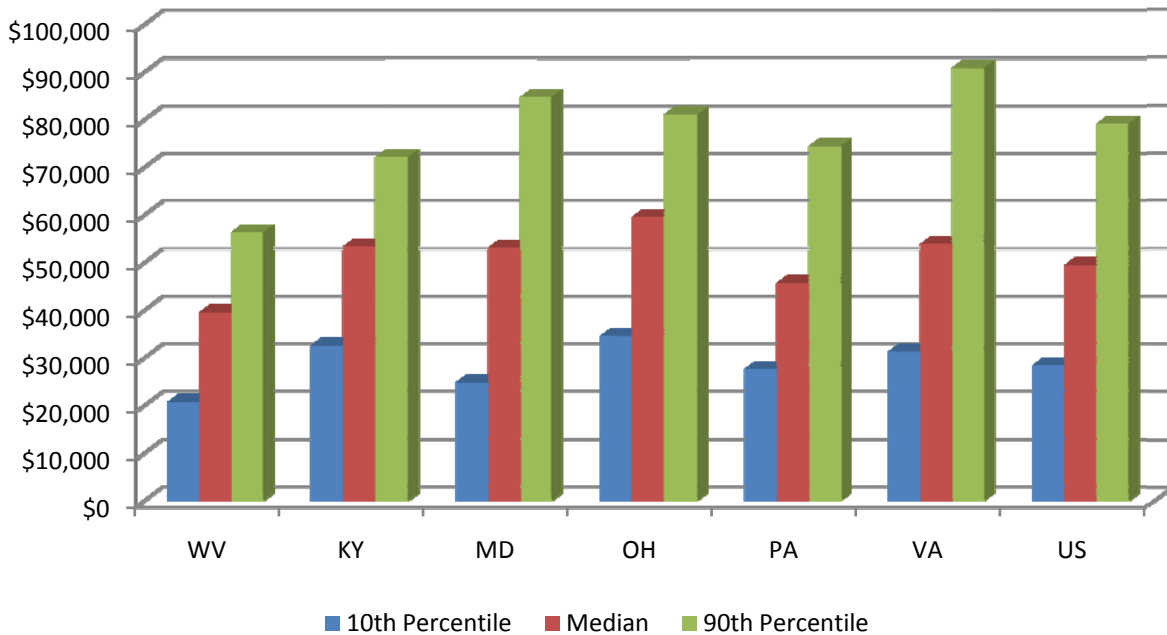
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics May 2007 Occupational Wage Estimates Series Data

2007 Trade and Industrial Teacher Wages

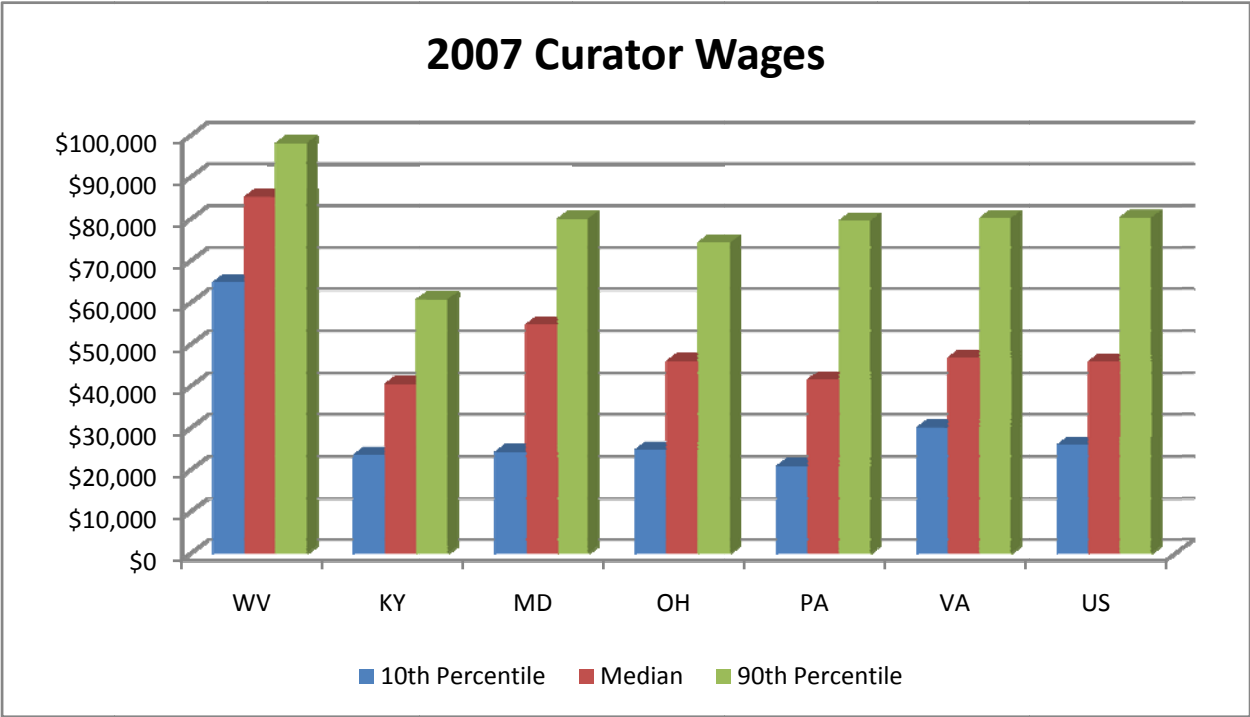


Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics May 2007 Occupational Wage Estimates Series Data

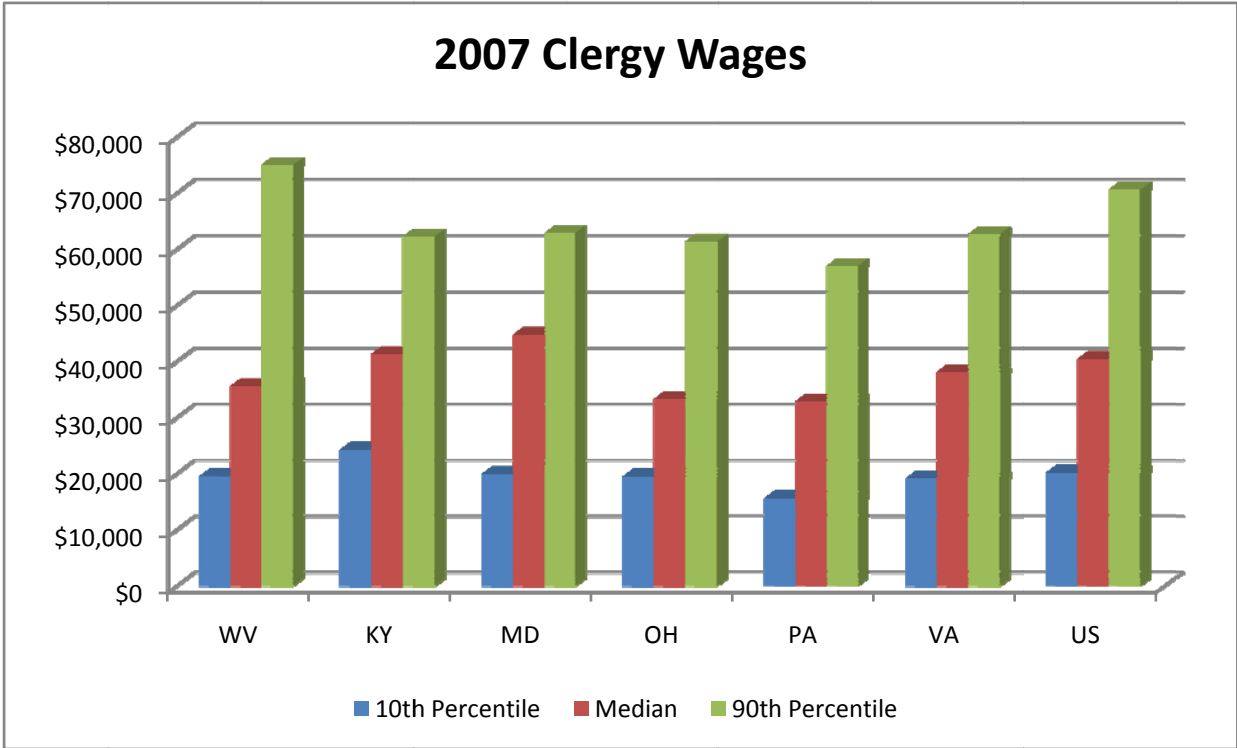
2007 Vocational and Education Counselor Wages



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics May 2007 Occupational Wage Estimates Series Data

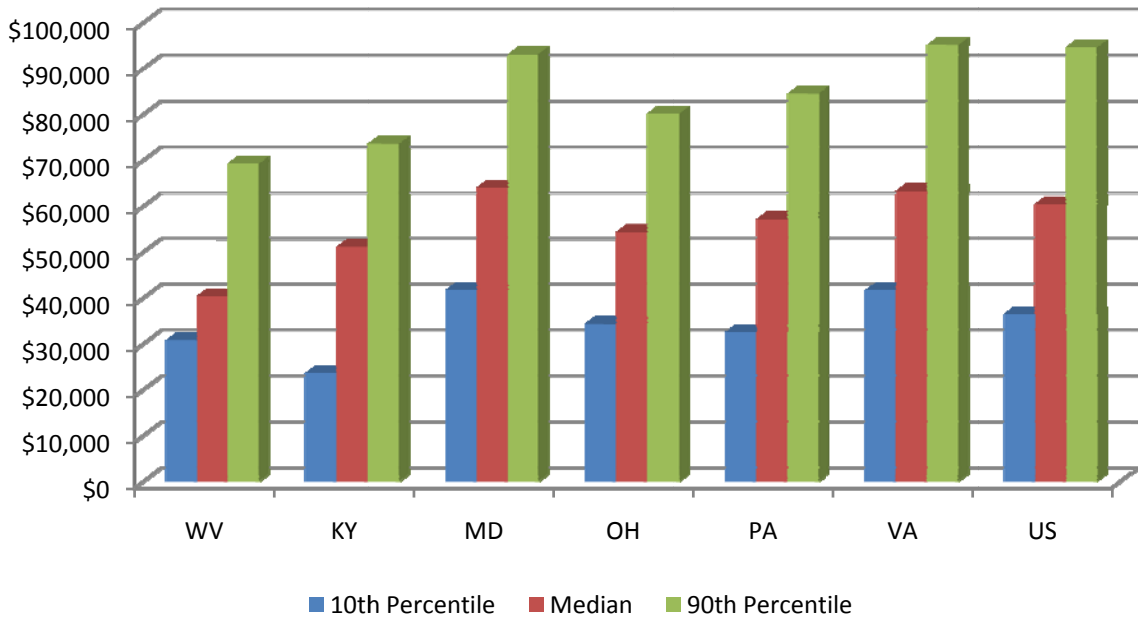


Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics May 2007 Occupational Wage Estimates Series Data



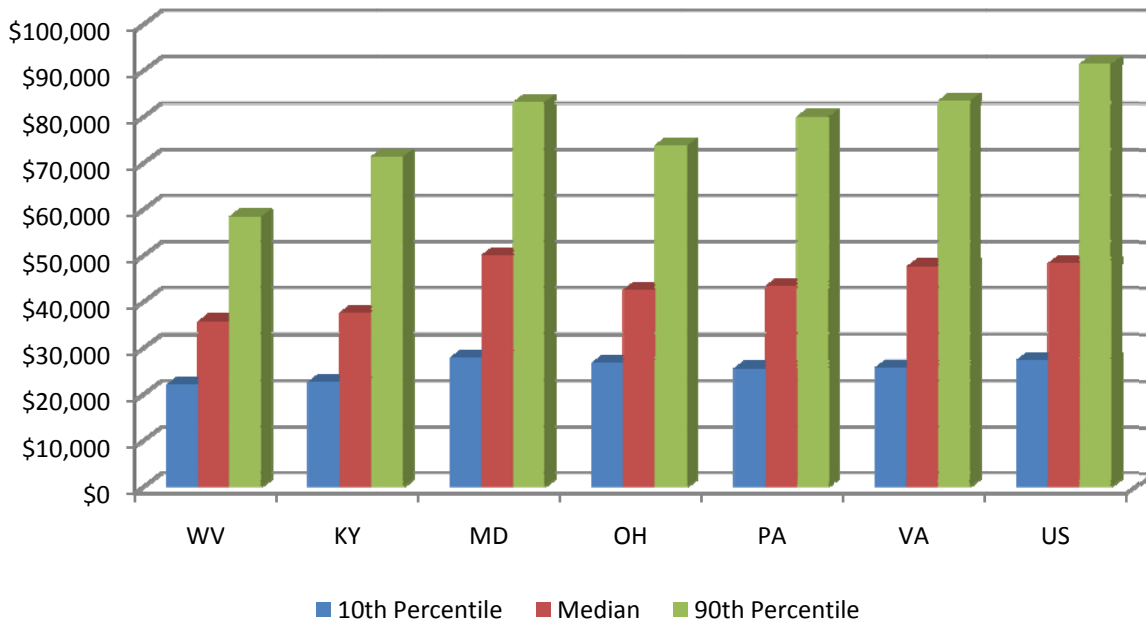
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics May 2007 Occupational Wage Estimates Series Data

2007 Technical Writer Wages

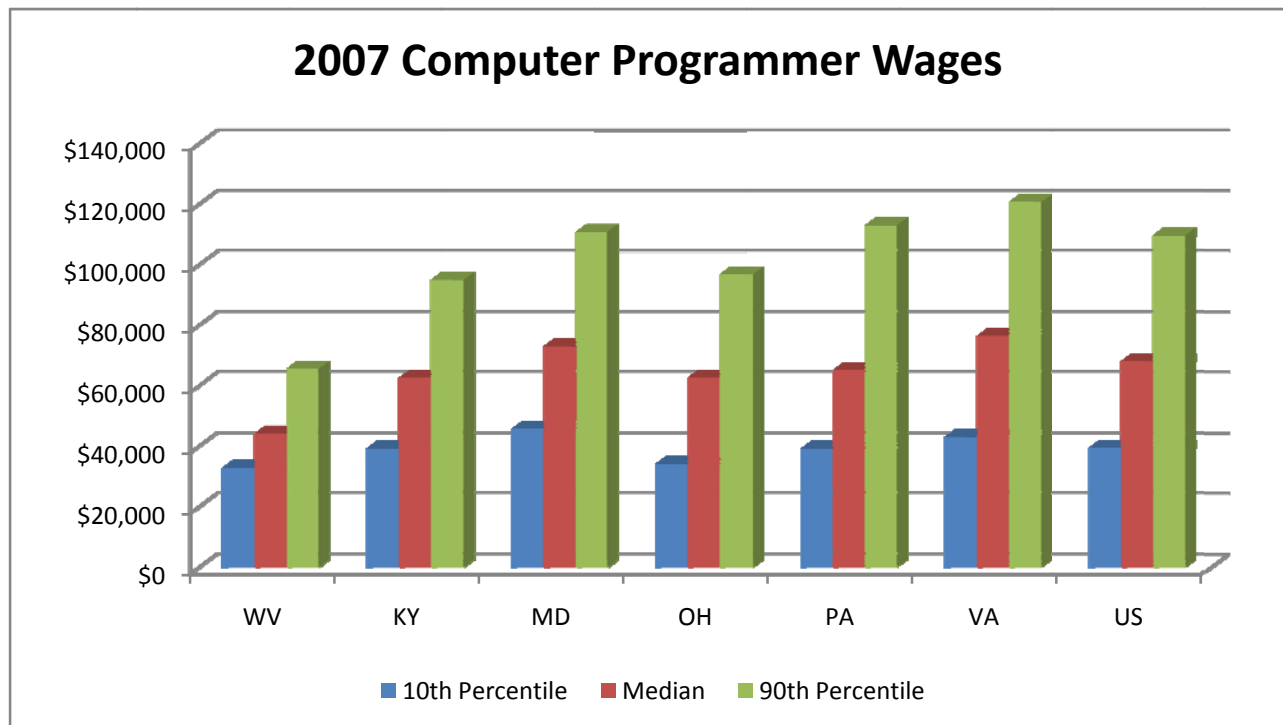


Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics May 2007 Occupational Wage Estimates Series Data

2007 Editor and Reporter Wages



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics May 2007 Occupational Wage Estimates Series Data



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics May 2007 Occupational Wage Estimates Series Data

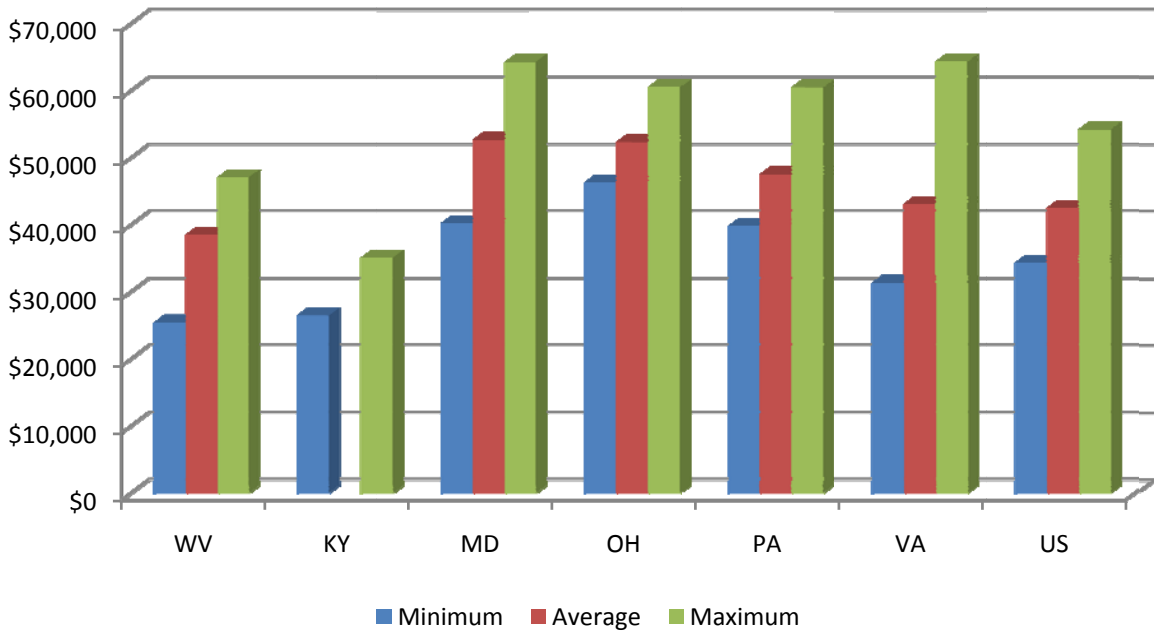
Comparisons of State Employee Salaries with Surrounding States and the U.S.

The preceding analysis indicated that West Virginia teachers were paid less than teachers in surrounding states and were paid less than those in comparable positions. The data also demonstrated that for majority of the selected occupations, wages in West Virginia fell below what was paid elsewhere.

For an additional perspective, a comparison was completed for state employees in West Virginia, surrounding states and the U.S. average. This study used data compiled by the American Federation of Teachers in the *AFT Public Employees Compensation Survey 2008*. In their study they considered 45 job titles for state employees. For the purposes of this study only eight are used as they compare favorably with the occupations used in the analysis concerning teacher salaries. Information by percentiles were not available in the AFT data, thus ranges from the lowest to the highest wages (including the average) were instead utilized. Data for the state of Kentucky was incomplete, but included here to the extent possible.

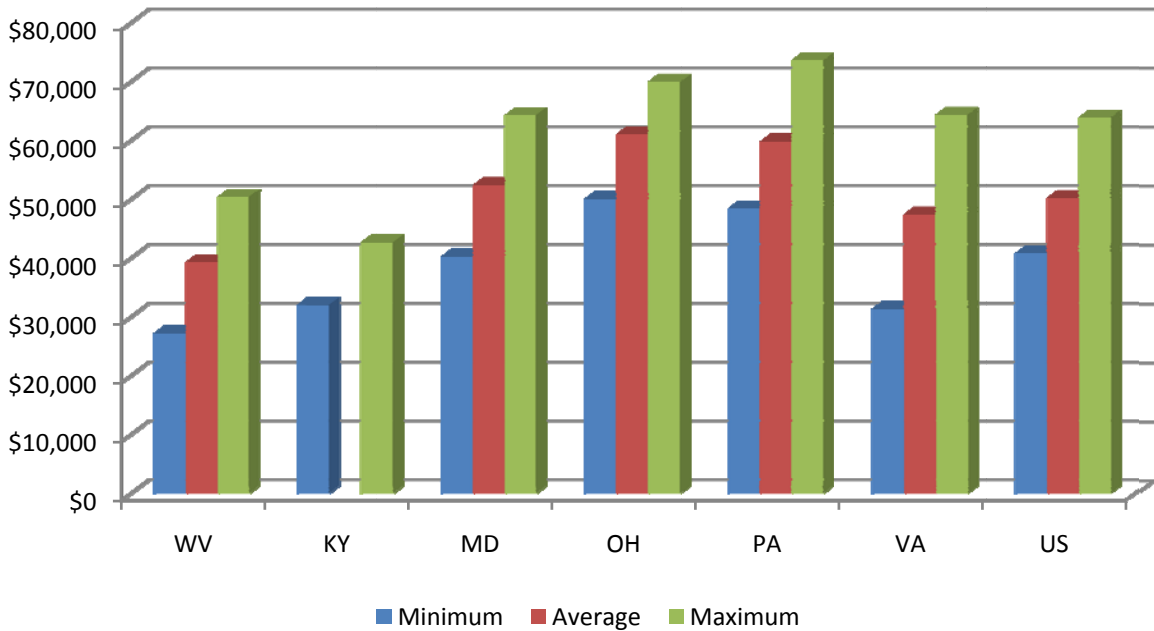
The same result is obtained. Salaries for state employees in West Virginia are below the salaries paid in surrounding states and when compared to the U.S. average.

Accountant Wages



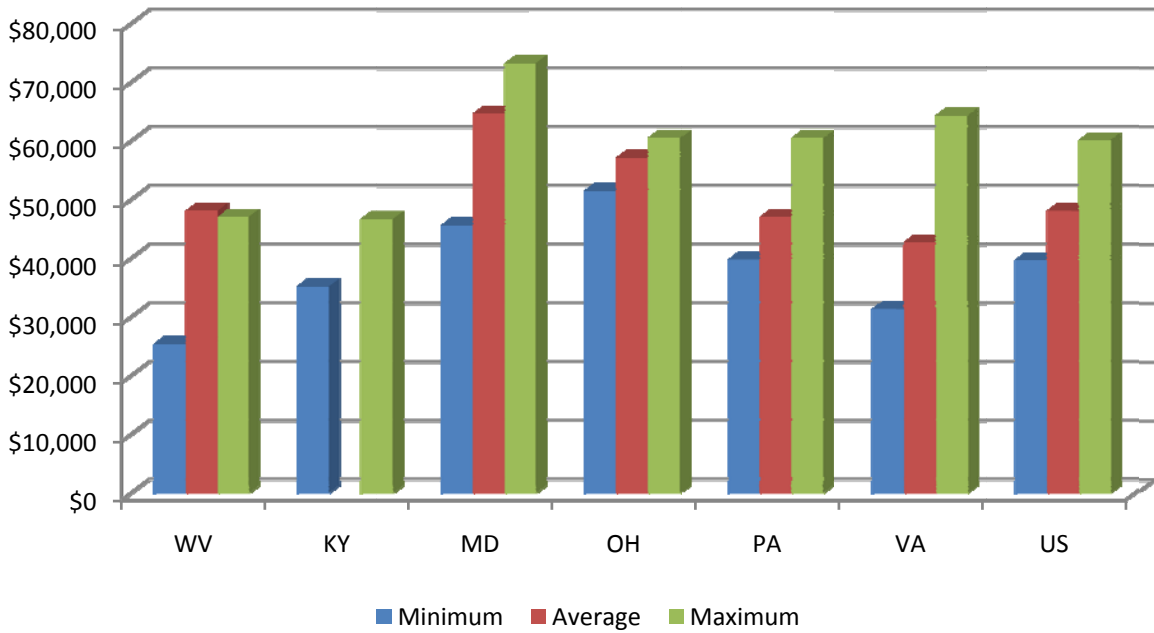
Source: AFT Public Employees Compensation Survey 2008

Registered Nurse Wages



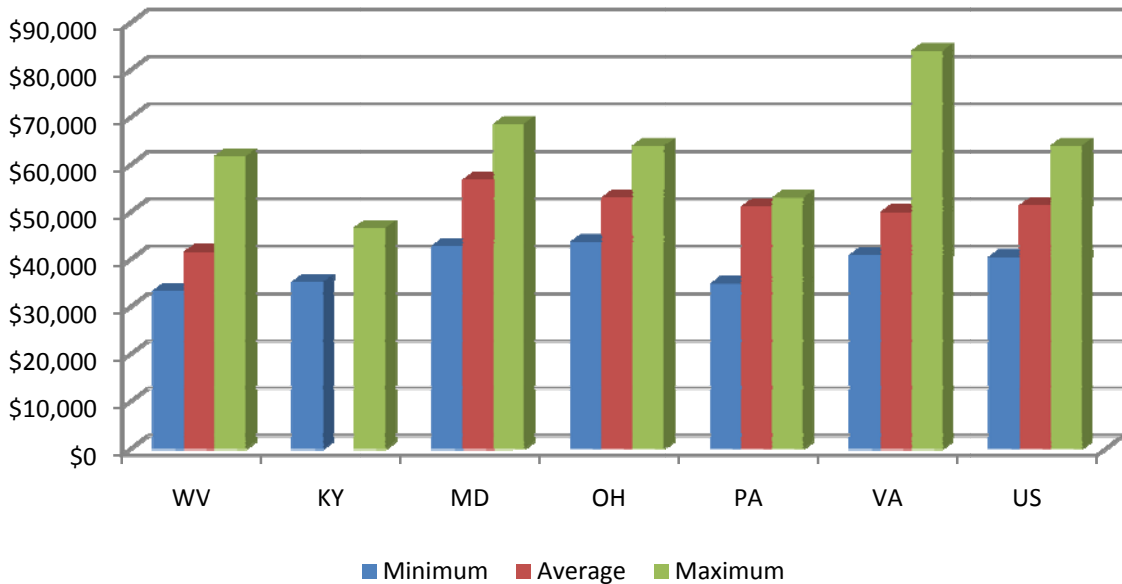
Source: AFT Public Employees Compensation Survey 2008

Classification and Compensation Analyst Wages

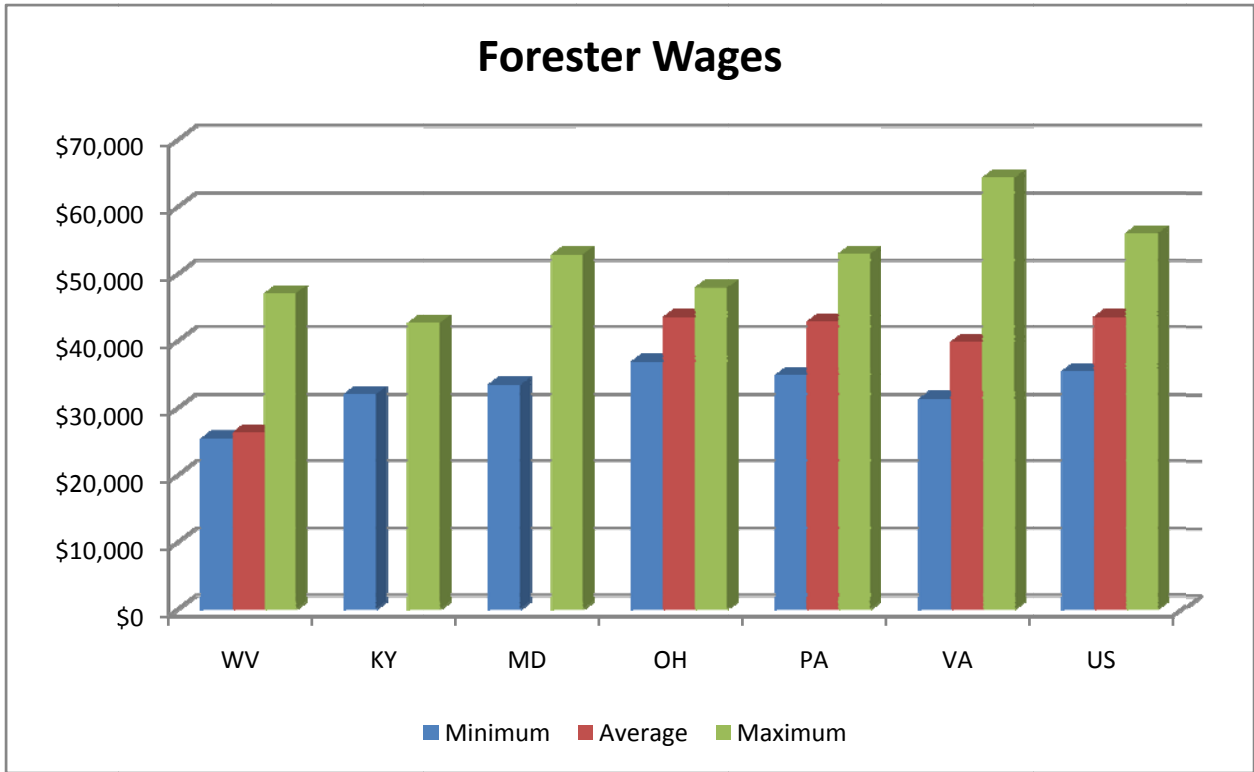


Source: AFT Public Employees Compensation Survey 2008

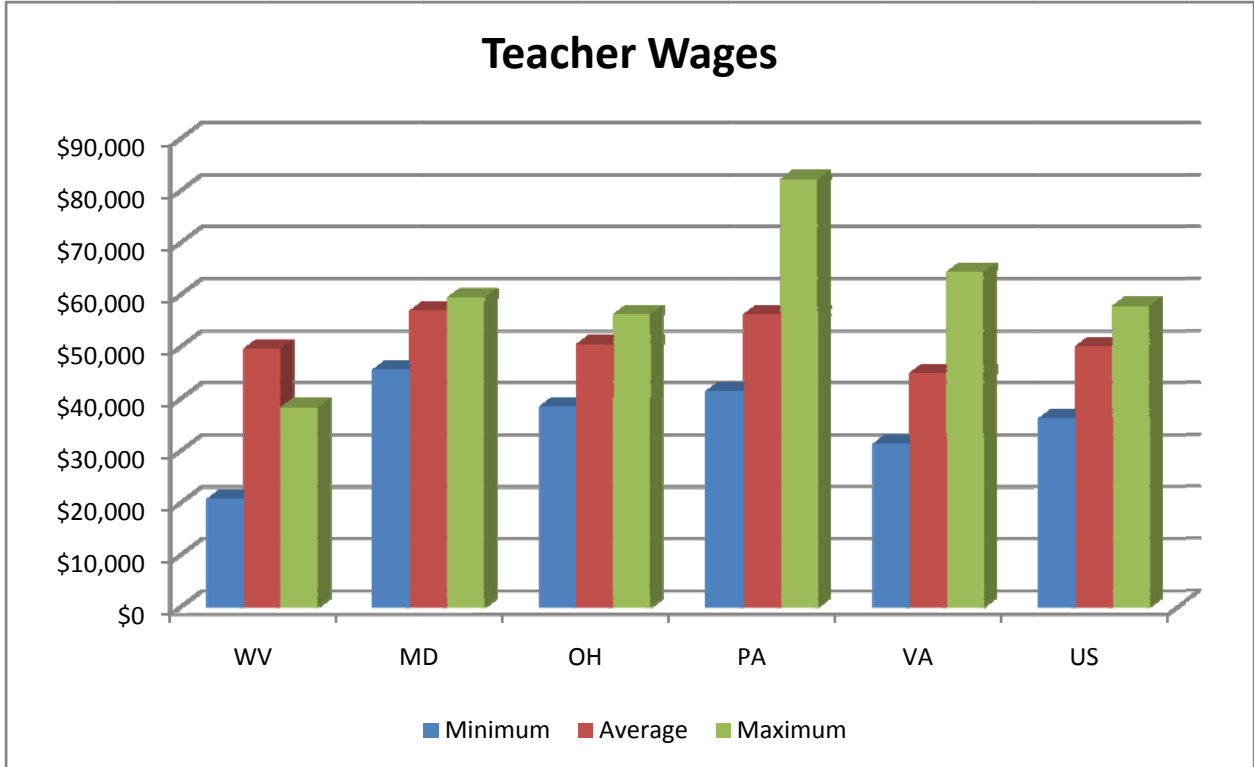
Programmer/Analyst Wages



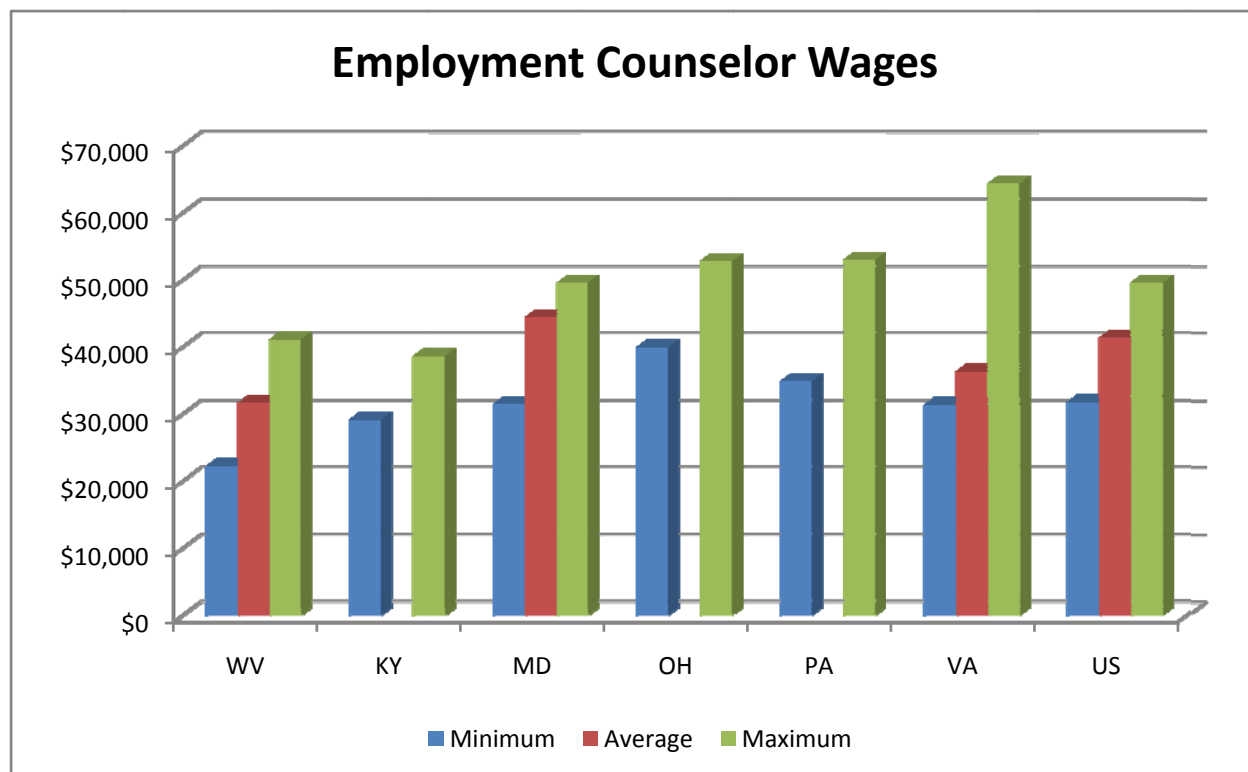
Source: AFT Public Employees Compensation Survey 2008



Source: AFT Public Employees Compensation Survey 2008



Source: AFT Public Employees Compensation Survey 2008



Source: AFT Public Employees Compensation Survey 2008

The conclusion is (for the occupations analyzed) that West Virginia is a low wage state. Wages for teachers and other occupations and state employees are almost always below what is paid either nationally or in surrounding states.

Methods to Increase Teacher Compensation

There are a variety of options available to increase teachers' salaries in West Virginia to make them more comparable to salaries paid in other professions which require a bachelor's degree.

- *Raising the state minimum salary scale used in the Public School Support Program (PSSP).* This would increase the required level of funding which school districts receive. Under this option the money would come from the general fund. This option would make sure that the money was used for teacher salaries.
- *Enact a state-wide excess levy on property* which would be designated exclusively for increasing teacher salaries. The proceeds from the levy would not necessarily be returned to the county where the tax was levied but would go to a "lock box" for distribution under the PSSP or directly to districts based on the number of FTE teachers provided for by the PSSP.
- *Designate a portion of an existing tax to pay the increased costs of raising teacher salaries.* The best source would be the sales tax as it is the most stable of all the state revenues. Other options would be the Excess Lottery Funds, sin taxes (liquor and tobacco) or utility taxes. A variant would be to increase one or more of the existing taxes to pay for the salary increases.

There are other means which might be considered to deal with the problems of recruiting and retaining teachers.

- *Loan forgiveness* is not directly related to making salaries of teachers comparable to other college educated professions, but it has the advantage of reducing the costs of education to the recipient as well as serving as an incentive to retain teachers in the state. Forgiveness could be phased in over a 5 year period. Studies indicate that once a person has been in a location for 3-5 years, the probability of their staying is significantly increased.
- *Bonus provisions* for teachers in shortage fields would address the problem of recruiting and retaining teachers where the need is the greatest (science, math, special education, etc.). The bonus would have to be permanent, part of the base salary and subject to the same increases as teacher pay in general. This should be limited only to “highly qualified” teachers or those who through additional training can be certified in a shortage field.
- *Competitive salary differentials* would recognize the problems that counties which border states where salaries are higher. These differentials would be based on a percentage, up to 100 percent, of the difference between what was being paid in the adjoining state or district. This should not be an across the board approach but based on the specialty of the teacher and the shortages which exist in the West Virginia counties.
- *Location differentials* would recognize that certain areas of the state may be less attractive either due to isolation or lack of amenities. The data show that the rural areas have as much trouble recruiting and keeping teachers as do the districts adjacent to other higher paying states. Adjusting salaries in these counties would serve to offset that disadvantage.
- *Cost of living adjustments* would serve to compensate for the higher living costs in certain locations in the state. Currently there is no satisfactory cost of living data available upon which to base this adjustment for geographic disaggregation in West Virginia. Other states, Florida for example, have made attempts to produce such an index, but at great cost.
- *Year-round schooling* would produce two benefits. First, the research clearly indicates that students retain more of what they have learned if they do not have the summer to forget it. “Re-teaching” the previous grade takes a significant portion of the first semester or quarter of the following year. The second advantage is that teachers would be compensated for the extra weeks worked.
- *Scholarships or grants* so current teachers can remain current in their fields or acquire the credentials to teach in a new area could also be considered. This is a method of dealing with critical areas of teacher shortage. It could also be used to assist those with expertise in a shortage area to obtain additional necessary teaching credentials.
- *Consolidating school districts*, while politically unpopular, would reduce administrative costs and perhaps provide a better curriculum through improved economies of scale.
- *Allowing school districts to “step across” county boundaries* would permit a more rational assignment of students, reduce travel time for many students and reduce transportation costs. Students would attend the school nearest their home regardless of the county of residence.

