

## MEMORANDUM

**To: FMA Regional Directors**

**From: Greg Stanford and Katie Maddocks**

**Re: FMA Government Affairs Update for October 2015**

**Date: November 6, 2015**

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The purpose of this memorandum is to provide a brief narrative and status of ongoing government relations and public affairs activities the FMA government relations department worked on in October 2015 on behalf of FMA members. Please share this information with chapter presidents, legislative action team leaders and others in your region.

### **Budget Deal Reached**

On October 27, the White House and GOP leaders within Congress introduced a two-year federal spending plan, the Bipartisan Budget Act (P.L. 114-74) that would fund the federal government through fiscal year 2017, increasing domestic and military spending by \$80 billion. The bill also lifted the debt ceiling until March 15, 2017. Additionally, the budget lifts two years of sequester budget caps by extending savings from Medicare and other mandatory spending programs. P.L. 114-74 also prevents drastic increases to premiums for those enrolled in Medicare Part B. While Medicare Part B enrollees will still see the scheduled increase of premiums, premiums will only be \$18 instead of \$54.

### **Paul Ryan Becomes the Speaker of the House**

At the end of September, John Boehner (R-OH) announced he would step down from the Speakership and would leave his seat in Congress on October 30. At first, Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) announced his candidacy for the position, however, he later dropped out. While Ways and Means Committee Chairman Paul Ryan (R-WI) first expressed hesitation regarding time commitment needed for the leadership position, he decided to run and was elected by Members of the House on October 29.

### **Wounded Warriors Legislation Awaits President's Signature**

On Monday, October 26, the Senate unanimously passed FMA's initiative, the Wounded Warriors Federal Leave Act (H.R. 313), which provides 104 hours of sick leave up front to first year federal employees who qualify under the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) as thirty percent or more disabled due to a service-related disability. The bill, introduced by Representative Stephen Lynch (D-MA) and cosponsored by Representative Blake Farenthold (R-TX), will provide necessary leave to attend medical appointments for service-related injuries without exhausting both sick and annual leave. Senators Jon Tester (D-MT) and Jerry Moran (R-KS) introduced similar legislation, which gained

unanimous support in the Senate. As H.R. 313 already passed unanimously in the House, this is the last step before the President signs the legislation into law.

### **FECA Reform in the Senate Postal Bill**

On October 2, Greg met with staff from the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee to discuss proposed reforms to the Federal Employee Compensation Act. FMA has long supported changes to FECA, including a reduction the FECA benefit from 75 percent to 66 2/3 percent of income for all beneficiaries, as well as the establishment of a FECA retirement program. The reforms in the new postal bill would prospectively bring compensation levels in line with retirement benefits.

### **Beth Cobert, Acting Director of OPM**

The Government Managers Coalition (GMC) met with Acting Director of OPM, Beth Cobert, and OPM Deputy Associate Director, Partnership and Labor Relations Employee Services (ES), Tim Curry, on October 7. The meeting covered a large range of topics, including: the OPM data breach and progress on providing protections for those affected; improvements made to USAJobs as a means to promote hiring; the results of the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, and its call to strengthen leadership role in engagement; the need to reaffirm management consulting rights; and the creation of dual tracking within the personnel system. The GMC will regularly meet with Director Cobert as a means to promote the interests of managers and supervisors throughout the federal government.

### **FEHB Premium Rates and FEHB Advisory Group**

Greg attended a briefing at OPM where the 2016 Federal Employee Health Benefit Program plan year premium rates. Non-postal federal employees and annuitants should expect a 6.4 percent increase, the largest since 2011. OPM Director of Healthcare and Insurance John O'Brien commented the increase is due to increases in prescription drug prices. Also in 2016, FEHBP enrollees will be able to sign up for a Self Plus One option for enrollment, which offers coverage for a federal employee and one dependent. The FEHBP Open Season runs from November 9 through December 14, and OPM encourages all enrollees to examine available health care plans to see which one is best suited for them.

### **Region Conferences**

FMA Region 4 met over the weekend of October 10 in Monterey, California, and the following weekend, Region 2 members met in Warner Robins, Georgia. Both groups used this time as an opportunity to discuss best practices within members' individual agencies and departments as well as current barriers managers face within the federal workforce. As FMA members continue to meet barriers of diminished federal budgets and dwindling workforce morale, it is helpful to hear advice on what other FMA chapters are doing about these problems that federal managers face across the country. At the Region 4 Conference, Dr. Jeffrey Paduan, Dean of Research at the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) and an FMA member, spoke of the mission of NPS as the nation's premier defense and security oriented graduate university. In this time of tightened federal budgets, while also facing constant threats to the nation's security, it is imperative that civilian members of DOD have access to educational resources. At the



Region 2 Conference, Charles Stenner, Jr., from the 21st Century Partnership discussed how to improve the civilian Department of Defense workforce as they continue to meet the demands for national security while facing reduced budgets. Attendees at both conferences also heard from FMA National President Pat Niehaus, who discussed budgetary issues facing the Association and how members can improve their Association and promote the federal workforce. Greg and Katie spoke to the groups to the legislative events that impact FMA members, such as the breach of personal identifying information at the Office of Personnel Management; threats of another government shutdown; and, the passage of the Wounded Warriors Federal Leave Act. Region 4 and Region 2 members also spoke to best practices and charitable works within their individual chapters.

#### **FMA on Federal News Radio**

Oct. 28 – Katie on Your Turn with Mike Causey, and was asked to come back every five weeks or so

#### **FMA-PAC Fundraisers**

Oct. 21 – Katie went to a reception for Rep. Blake Farenthold (R-TX)

Oct. 22 – Katie went to a reception for Rep. Xavier Becerra (D-CA)