



Your FMA Monthly Grassroots Update

August 2019

Dear FMA Member,

Welcome to your August grassroots update! We hope you will use this tool to learn more about the issues FMA is working on, the responses of our national office team and leadership, and the many ways you can help. We are very excited about the work we are doing with the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress.

## More Progress on FMA Issue Brief!

Thanks to your great work and outreach to members of Congress, the Federal Retirement Fairness Act (H.R. 2478), which would allow FERS employees to buy back temporary time toward their retirement, is now up to 35 bipartisan cosponsors. This is almost double what similar legislation received in the 115th Congress.

If you haven't already sent a letter of support to your representative, please click on this link to access this action letter: <https://www.fedmanagers.org/Action-Letters>. The letter urges support for H.R. 2478. As always, the letter is drafted and ready to send as-is, but it is fully editable to allow you to personalize it and insert any anecdotal information you'd like. Please take a moment to send an action letter on this issue, and urge your fellow FMA members to send one as well!

## Meet Your Legislators in August

The House of Representatives has begun its District Work Period, and the Senate will begin its State work period at the end of this week. That means neither chamber will be in session until September 9th. Between now and then, members of Congress will take this time to meet locally with constituents, conducting town hall meetings and meet-and-greets. You can find schedules for events by finding your Representative and Senators' websites through [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) and [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov).

This is a great opportunity for FMA members to meet with their elected officials in their state/local offices to discuss matters affecting their career. It is important to remind Representatives and Senators of the services you provide to the American people.

Many pressing issues await Congress when it returns in September, highlighted by the need to pass appropriations bills to fund Fiscal Year 2020, which begins on October 1. Your elected officials need to hear from you on how budget uncertainty and the potential for another government shutdown will directly affect you and your ability to meet your congressionally mandated mission and goals. Use this time to make your voice heard!

## Feedback Requested: MERIT Act Reintroduced

In June, the Modern Employment Reform, Improvement, and Transformation (MERIT) Act of 2019 (H.R. 3348 / S. 1898) was reintroduced. The bill would make significant changes to the firing process and affect employee protections. The bill passed the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, which approved the bill on a party-line vote last year, **but is unlikely to receive a hearing or be considered on the House floor this year. It is therefore not expected to be signed into law.** However, it is still important to know where FMA members stand with regard to this legislation.

Briefly the bill:

1. Streamlines the process and shortens the amount of time (from 30 days to 15 days) required to remove underperforming employees
2. Allows agencies to remove a senior executive for performance/conduct reasons, rather than merely demote them.
3. Limits retirement benefits of employees who are removed from their position due to a felony conviction related to their official duties.
4. Authorizes agencies to recoup bonuses and awards when performance or conduct issues are discovered.
5. Extends the probationary period for competitive appointments and promotions from one year to two years after formal training is completed.
6. Curbs the ability to use intermediaries to overrule or undermine Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) precedent.
7. Upholds critical whistleblower protections.

Proponents of the legislation argue the provisions in the bill give managers more tools and are commonsense ways to address poor performers and increase accountability. Opponents argue the decreases to appeal times and other changes cut directly at due process and mention a slippery slope toward an at-will federal workforce.

Click here to read the full text of the legislation. Then please take a moment to share your feedback on the bill's provisions by taking a short survey. Your answers will help shape our response and how vocal FMA is about this bill moving forward. You can access the survey regarding the MERIT Act by [clicking here](#). If this link does not work, please paste this URL into your browser: <http://survey.constantcontact.com/survey/a07egfgecptjxdahdno/start>

**To Do List:**

- [Send an action letter](#)
- Attend a town hall or arrange a meeting in your district with your elected officials during the August District/State Work Period**
- Reply to a [short survey](#) on the reintroduced MERIT Act
- [Begin a payroll deduction contribution to FMA-PAC](#)
- Visit [www.fedmanagers.org](http://www.fedmanagers.org) to catch up on the latest news affecting federal managers!

Very truly yours,

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