

## DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCES PERSPECTIVE




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From Our President...

## **CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS COST EVERY AMERICAN**

FMA Family,

I hope you and your family are doing well. As I am writing this article over the Labor Day weekend, I started to reflect about what federal employees have had to endure over the last nine months. The year started off great with our Director of Government & Public Affairs Greg Stanford attending a ceremony at the White House as President Biden signed into law the Social Security Fairness Act on January 5th. This was legislation that FMA had fought for over the last twenty years and was one of our issue briefs every year. Federal employees were then exposed to mass layoffs, firings and hiring freezes. I am on record saying that there is a lot of waste in the way the government is structured and how it handles its business side of things, but a more realistic plan should have been implemented instead of the circus that was on display. Most federal workers are honorable, hardworking people who do the best they can with the situation they face. They deserve to be treated respectfully. On August 31st., President Trump presented Congress with the Alternative Pay Plan that will give most federal employees a 1 percent raise for 2026 while federal law enforcement and the military will receive a well-deserved 3.8 percent raise. A 1 percent raise does not keep up with inflation, or ever-increasing health care premiums, and puts us even further behind the 25 percent pay gap with the private sector.

As we are nearing the end of fiscal year 2025, it is shaping up that we will start October under yet another Continuing Resolution (CR). This has become the norm with our members of Congress. One of their biggest responsibilities each year, no later than October 1st, is to fund the government so agencies have the resources they need to provide services to the citizens of the United States. However, Congress has only been able to achieve this two times in the last fifty years, with 1997 being the last fiscal year for which no CR's were enacted. If President Trump is really serious about finding and reducing waste within the federal government, he should start with our members of Congress and push them to do their jobs. It is terribly wasteful to have

our government work through CRs, costing taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars each year. This is a burden on our citizens, and it adds significant extra duties for our federal workforce to work under several back-to-back CR's. Hopefully, some sanity will prevail, and we will not have a government shutdown. Please continue to reach out to your members of Congress and express the need for them to govern efficiently for the sake of our country.

I hope you have had a chance to attend some of the FMA Town Halls that we have held this year. The Town Halls are conducted on Zoom every 2-3 months and all FMA members are invited and encouraged to attend. These events are held to brief members on current happenings within the federal government and, even more importantly, allows you to voice your concerns. If you have something you would like us to address at a Town Hall meeting, please reach out to our Executive Director Todd Wells or myself. If you have any questions, ideas or concerns you can reach us at the following:

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Sincerely,

Craig Carter  
FMA National President



**COVER**



# **DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCES PERSPECTIVE**

*The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of any agency or its leadership.*

The recent standup of the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health (ARPA-H) provides an easily applicable series of steps for sequentially developing a strategic Human Resource (HR) focus applicable to any agency environment. In Part I, the authors emphasize the need to align your HR programs with your agency's mission, structures, and organizational culture. Part II reviews how a variety of HR programs and tools were applied by ARPA-H to rapidly establish mission supportive structures staffed by well-trained technical experts and specialists, a large percentage of whom were recruited to fill mission-critical, historically hard-to-fill positions. Part III outlines lessons learned.

## Part I: Understanding Your Organizational Reality

### Step 1: Define How Your Organization's Mission Fits in the Big Picture

Congressional legislation established ARPA-H in March 2022. The ARPA-H website identifies its mission as "...a research funding agency that supports transformative biomedical and health breakthroughs – ranging from the molecular to the societal – to provide health solutions for all,"<sup>1</sup> also noting that "ARPA-H advances high-potential, high-impact biomedical and health research that

cannot be accomplished through traditional research or commercial activity. ARPA-H awardees are developing entirely new ways to tackle the hardest challenges in health."

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), ARPA-H's parent department, houses multiple components established to advance the health sciences. The Department of Defense, Veterans Administration, and multiple other federal agencies participate in health research initiatives, as do state and local governments, private labs, and academia. The defined desired outcome of ARPA-H efforts is to address those potentially high impact health breakthroughs that have proved particularly difficult to address within typical government priorities and resource limits or by individual commercial or academic laboratories.

Defining how ARPA-H programs best support research within the broader federal framework of public health as defined in congressional law and appropriations was step one in visualizing how best to structure its HR programs, and prerequisite to development of positive partnerships supportive of long-term mission execution.



### Step 2: Identify Your Optimal Organizational Structures

Federal agency structures are documented in approved organizational charts and mission statements. Authority to revise structures at the local or regional levels varies significantly by agency. Successful establishment or revision of an organization's structure is always a team effort requiring the active involvement of senior leadership, financial managers, and HR experts.

Aligned with its congressionally approved mission, budget, and full-time equivalent (FTE) allocation, ARPA-H began by quickly filling senior executive, administrative, and key HR positions to create its vision of well-defined optimal organization structures and related communication processes. Organizational structures went through multiple iterations, changing to reflect the input of newly hired leaders aligned to an evolving understanding of how best to optimize positive reinforcement of the primary research mission through alignment with farsighted administrative delivery systems. From its inception, it was clearly understood that agency standup would be heavily dependent upon contractors, requiring that budget and procurement operations be established that reflected this priority.

As senior staff arrived, transparent policies and decision-making procedures were brought online establishing a senior official responsible for position management and resource allocation decisions that permitted leadership at the office and division levels to structure positions within allocated FTE and labor fundings, but requiring higher authority approval of requests to augment existing authorizations to ensure they reflected emerging mission or demonstrable workload changes.

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The final defined optimal organization structure established structures that met three requirements:

- Accomplish primary mission through dedicated mission offices tasked with identifying research priorities, documenting resource requirements, and actively participating in project approval to establish and execute historically difficult health research initiatives.
- Create infrastructure that ensures Congress, the Office of the President, other agencies, the public, and both academic and commercial establishments have maximum opportunity to understand and, as appropriate, benefit from ARPA-H research breakthroughs.
- Ensure that supporting information technology (including emerging AI), financial resources, and HR programs are aligned to best support mission execution.

### Step 3: Align Your Operations with Your Organizational Culture

Rank-in-position HR programs such as those used for federal employees assigned to ARPA-H begin by assigning a position to an organizational chart. The resulting position description outlines the duties and responsibilities of the position which establish the basic qualifications, state or imply the competencies required for candidate assessment and development, and establish the types and level of work upon which performance will be based. Rank-in-Positions systems assume the position structure is relatively static and not subject to frequent realignment of structures into temporary project-based teams. It is appropriate for what Burns and Stalker in their seminal contribution to the organizational literature<sup>2</sup> refer to as a mechanistic management system characterized by stable conditions with distinct and differentiated tasks; well-defined supervisory hierarchy and knowledge



that authorize and control performance; defined duties and responsibilities; tendency toward vertical interaction; insistence on loyalty and obedience; and prestige based upon knowledge of local policies and practices. The military and other first responder organizations typically operate in a predominantly mechanistic system in order to respond decisively in emergency environments.

ARPA-H primary research mission values creative problem-solving through advancement in state-of-the-art health research. An emphasis on creative risk-taking is characteristic of organic organizational systems where, to paraphrase Burns and Stalker, specialized knowledge is contributed to the overall situation with continual redefinition of individual tasks; contributions are measured in terms of project impact, not defined hierarchical status or perceived loyalty; and there is an ongoing emphasis on continuous collaborative successful interaction. Recognition comes from contribution to the field, not compliance with hierarchy based operational orders.

The success of ARPA-H HR programs is

dependent upon ensuring its programs meet the organizational design, recruitment, retention, performance, and developmental needs of its staff. Determining how best to establish HR programs that support the creative needs of research organizations operating under an organic model while rationally managing administrative programs within well-defined law, regulation, and delegated authorities emphasizing accountability when issuing contracts, obligating funds, and executing HR actions consistent with mechanistic structures was the initial priority in establishing its HR programs and remains an ongoing goal and challenge.

## Part II: Establishing HR Programs Supportive of Mission and Organizational Culture

A potential barrier to sustainability of ARPA-H programs is the nature of rank-in-position HR programs operating in a research environment. Accomplishment of the research mission requires flexible, team-based organizations constantly revising their focus and membership consistent with emerging breakthroughs or course changes characteristic of organic models. HR program models with well-defined career paths permitting flexibility in moving staff among positions with changing duties without impacting pay are characteristic of rank-in-

<sup>1</sup> ARPA-H website | ARPA-H Home | ARPA-H

<sup>2</sup> Tom Burns and G.M. Stalker, *The Management of Innovation*, (London: Tavistock Publications, 1961)



person military and foreign service positions, not rank-in-position programs which typically focus on incumbency of individual positions vs. careers.

Concurrently, ARPA-H requires the rationality of a rank-in-position mechanistic model to ensure that contracts, budgets and other resource allocations, information technology expenditures, public affairs, HR, and myriad other staff programs are operated in a transparent, integrated manner where ARPA-H executives and congressional liaison staff can successfully justify operations decisions to higher government level (e.g., Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Management and Budget, Office of the President, and Congress), other government agencies, academics, and many others, including the media and the public.

The need to successfully integrate the apparently conflicting priorities of organic and mechanistic structures creates a unique push and pull between creating something that is innovative while remaining regulatory compliant. Early in the agency startup process of a flexible strategic vision, candid collaboration, strategic recruitment, and

teamwork that charts the path forward for the organization are crucial.

## Vision

ARPA-H initial startup began by temporarily filling key operational and singular executive positions. These positions were critical in establishing the organization from scratch. While legislation determined the “why,” these early onboards determined the “how.” Each member of the inaugural temporary staff came with a host of research and administrative credentials. One of the first decisions made was to bring onboard experienced HR practitioners with government experience and a health support background. This small group collaborated with existing federal partners, other ARPAs, and a cadre of highly specialized contractors, to create a blueprint for ARPA-H to quickly gather top talent as well as stand up the framework for necessary operational systems and tools. Within a few months, other key executive positions were filled while recruiting for a highly credentialed director.

Newly hired executives and key research support staff were given the flexibility to structure their organizations within established FTEs and budgets incorporating best practices from other federal agencies, academia, commercial labs, and

others. Their inputs were integrated into a defined optimal organization that went through numerous revisions as structures solidified, resulting in the successful integration of competency, transparent position descriptions, and job profiles with multiple appointment and contracting authorities that could rapidly bring on board skilled staff and integrate them into an appropriate organic research mission office or mechanistic staff cultures.

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From the onset, the use of flexible appointing authorities that allowed for term limited appointments and faster timelines to hire were immediately deployed.

## Collaboration

There are many players in the development of an organization. When starting from scratch, responsive operational HR functions are critical in identifying the core functions needed to build an organization at each phase. Budget and Finance are also key. The collaboration between the two are paramount in providing complete organizational design, recruitment, and development advisory services to position management officers and executive leadership. Early and frequent collaboration with the comptroller team allowed for budget-based strategy development that was especially important to recruitment efforts. Everything from how many people can be hired, to how recruitment, relocation, and retention incentives can be used to attract and retain talent were all addressed. In addition to effective internal communications, incorporation of best practices and lessons learned from external experts is essential.

Recruiting senior staff and contractors experienced in the highly effective operations of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA – which includes a health research mission),<sup>3</sup> and ongoing collaboration with its current internal staff, was invaluable in brainstorming the most effective position and organizational structures, as well as recruitment strategies, particularly for the research focused mission offices. Essential to the establishment of ARPA-H HR programs has been a positive, ongoing interface with the NIH HR office which provides both advisory and ongoing service center like operational support. Their willingness to brainstorm options as structures and recruitment priorities changed was critical to effectively



moving forward.<sup>4</sup>

Another mechanism that played a critical role in collaboration was the use of federal detailees. Federal agencies from across government were poised to deploy talent to this highly visible establishment effort. Tapping into this existing talent pool allowed ARPA-H to pull in and cycle out top talent quickly. This constant churn of talent allowed for key infrastructure to be built within federal regulations at rapid speed.

## Strategic Recruitment

As FTE allocations, labor budgets, and other financials stabilized, we drilled down to the “how.” Having special appointment authorities that worked in tandem with traditional hiring mechanisms allowed for the development of a strategy that spoke to both the mechanistic and organic needs of the organization. Our recruitment strategy effectively established a mixed workforce of federal government employees (both General Schedule (GS) hires, a temporary GS Direct Hire Authority, and the use of an Administratively Determined (AD) appointing authority), the use of government fellowship programs, and temporary

details to constantly update advanced research competencies, and the use of contractor staff to provide flexibly available expertise.

Our ability to leverage the AD appointing authority allowed the use of term appointments to constantly update advanced research competencies. A high percentage of researchers are hired from academia or the commercial sector on term appointments that may be renewed to address well-defined research priorities, including those they may have proposed themselves, to accomplish historically high risk, high reward, public health opportunities beyond the research priorities or risk tolerance of commercial or academic research organizations.

Each hire was expected to hit the ground running in a very literal way. ARPA-H recruitment strategies ensured that hires were targeted, vetted, and had a clear understanding of the mission ahead before joining the team. Seats were filled from the top down and branch chiefs were onboarded and quickly acclimated to the team. Their first task was hiring. Each branch chief worked in close partnership with the HR team to further develop organizational structure, identify core functions of the most important roles to be filled and kick off searches for talent.

## One Team. One Flight.

The critical elements to the HR team’s success were rooted in a clear understanding that we were a team on a single mission to build an organization. Our internal mission to move forward at full speed, embrace flexibility, pivot and foster an open/fun/transparent team culture touched everything we did. The team dynamic and the mix of expertise in both the federal and private sector skills ranged from three to over forty years. This mix provided a deep wealth of knowledge and understanding

3 Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency ([darpa.mil](http://darpa.mil))

4 NIH: Office of Human Resources

5 Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency ([darpa.mil](http://darpa.mil))

of the law/compliance and made way for many new ideas to chart our own path. Frequent team meetings and cross functional communication kept the team on the flight to success.

Ultimately, our charge was set by our division director. Her courage and unwavering commitment to excellence and trust ensured that the team was equipped to take on the herculean feat of serving as the backbone for organizational standup.

## Part III: Lessons Learned

Various theoretical models exist describing organizational life cycles.<sup>5</sup> Most emphasize that, unless specifically addressed, organizations can drift from dynamic

functional to internalized dysfunctional behaviors. One author regularly taught college classes with high percentages of federally affiliated students who found the distinction between administrative and bureaucratic models useful.

Administrative organizations are externally focused with tolerance for realistic risk taking within coherent administrative delivery systems. Bureaucratic organizations are internally focused, see change as a threat, where regulatory compliance is valued over mission accomplishment. They prioritize their own well-being over their customers and emphasize the avoidance of risk in order to minimize negative feedback.

ARPA-H leaders are well-aware that their high-risk health research initiatives have potential for major scientific breakthroughs while concurrently subject to high profile

criticism from many directions. Their HR programs have been established to support a positive administrative culture, while constantly adjusting to avoid the drift toward bureaucratic behaviors. ●

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*Tim Winchell is president of Job Analytics, LLC and is a retired Federal HR Specialist. He has taught HR at the graduate and undergraduate levels and published extensively on federal operations, including in PPM. In March, he was a presenter at FMA's 2025 National Convention and Management Training Seminar.*

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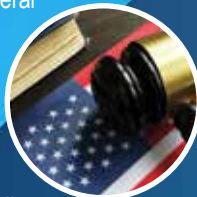


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## INFLUENCE IN A CHANGING WORKFORCE

By Adam Henckler, P.E.

The modern workforce is evolving at an unprecedented pace, and leadership must adapt to thrive. In today's environment, successful management relies not on authority but on influence – the ability to inspire, motivate, and guide others toward a shared vision. This is especially true for managers within the federal government who operate in a complex and dynamic

environment shaped by unique challenges, such as navigating bureaucratic structures, fostering collaboration across agencies, and meeting the needs of a workforce in turmoil. It was a privilege to be a keynote speaker at the Federal Managers Association's 87th annual National Convention and Management Training Seminar in Alexandria, Virginia, in March. Surrounded by dozens of other federal managers, I had the opportunity to share my research and findings on the topic of influence and provide tools that can be

applied immediately for success.

### The Changing Workforce & The Need for Influence

The workplace of today is a far cry from the rigid hierarchies of the past. Generations ago, leadership was synonymous with authority – managers gave orders, and employees followed. However, today's workforce is



driven by collaboration, trust, and autonomy. Employees, particularly Millennials and Generation Z, want to understand the “why” behind decisions and expect mentorship, flexibility, and purpose-driven work, as highlighted in my article in the summer 2024 issue of *The Federal Manager* titled “Generation WHY?”

This shift in workforce demographics has significant implications for leadership. While Generation X and Baby Boomers still occupy many leadership roles, they must navigate an environment where employees value engagement over directives. As Simon Sinek famously stated, “People don’t buy what you do; they buy why you do it.”

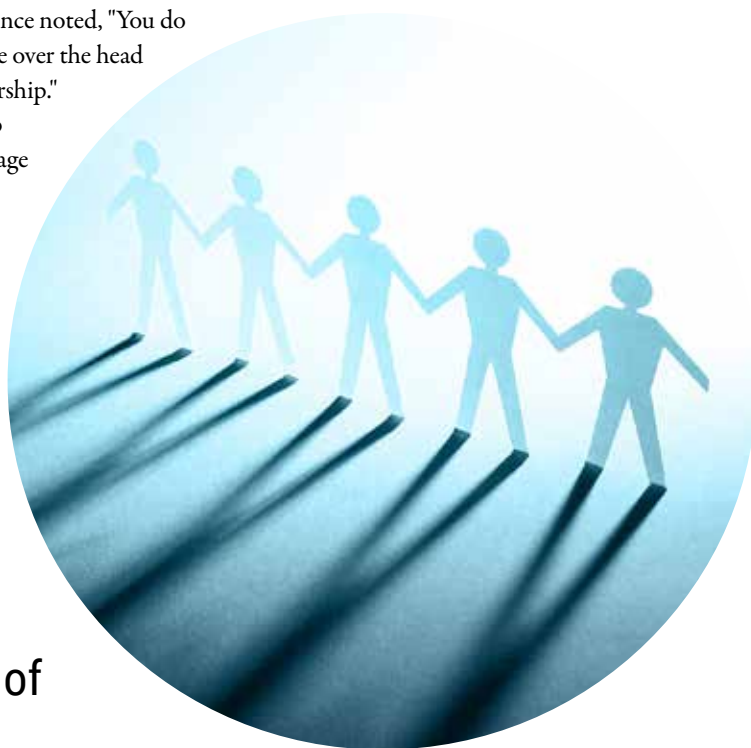
The rise of hybrid and remote work has further transformed leadership. Physical presence is no longer necessary to lead effectively; managers must build trust, foster relationships, and influence teams virtually. Command-and-control leadership fails in a digital workspace where employees expect autonomy, trust, and empowerment. As

Dwight D. Eisenhower once noted, “You do not lead by hitting people over the head – that’s assault, not leadership.”

Managers who cling to authority struggle to engage and inspire their teams. New managers, in particular, often lack formal authority, making influence their most powerful tool. As Sheryl Sandberg said, “Leadership is about making others better as a result of your presence and making sure that impact lasts in your absence.”

## The 3 Pillars of Influence

To lead through influence, managers must cultivate three essential qualities: credibility,



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connection, and communication. These pillars form the foundation for impactful leadership, enabling managers to navigate complex challenges, inspire their teams, and drive meaningful change. By mastering these skills, leaders can engage employees, earn trust, and foster a culture of collaboration and excellence.

**1. Credibility** – The Trust Factor – Credibility is the foundation of influence. If people don't trust you, they won't follow you. A manager's title alone does not guarantee respect – it's earned through consistent actions and integrity. Building credibility involves being competent, honest, and accountable. Admitting mistakes and demonstrating humility establishes authenticity. As a new manager, focus on learning, listening, and delivering on promises to earn trust.

**2. Connection** – Leading Through Relationships – Influence is rooted in relationships, not rules. To connect with employees, managers must understand their motivations, challenges, and aspirations. Genuine empathy and active listening go a long way in building rapport. Managers who invest time in one-on-one conversations and lead with empathy cultivate loyalty and a stronger team culture.

**3. Communication** – The Power of Clarity & Storytelling – Influence thrives on effective communication. Leaders must convey vision and expectations clearly while inspiring action. Avoid corporate jargon and focus on clarity, storytelling, and adaptability. Engaging stories make messages memorable, while feedback and active listening ensure alignment. Great communicators inspire commitment and drive change.

## The 5 C's of Influence for New Managers

To successfully navigate today's complex and dynamic workplace, federal managers need a versatile approach to leadership – one that emphasizes the power of influence over authority. The 5 C's of Influence provide a practical framework for new managers to inspire, motivate, and lead their teams effectively. By mastering these five principles, managers can drive performance, foster trust, and create a culture of collaboration and growth.

**1. Clarity** – Set the Vision & Expectation – Managers must paint a clear picture of goals, priorities, and expectations. Clear communication helps teams understand their roles and feel aligned with the mission.



## The 3 Pillars of Influence

### Credibility



#### The Trust Factor

- Credibility is the foundation of influence. If people don't trust you, they won't follow you.
- It's not about your title—it's about how consistently you deliver on your promises.
- Ways to build credibility as a new manager:
  - **Be competent** – Know your stuff, or be willing to learn.
  - **Be honest** – Admit when you don't know something.
  - **Be accountable** – Own mistakes and set the example.

### Connection



#### Leading Through Relationships

- Influence is about relationships, not rules. If you can't connect with people, you can't influence them.
- The best leaders understand what motivates their teams on an individual level.
- How to build a connection:
  - **Listen actively** – Seek to understand before being understood.
  - **Empathize** – Recognize individual challenges and aspirations.
  - **Be present** – Engage with your team beyond just tasks and deadlines.

### Communication



#### The Power of Clarity

- Influence doesn't come from what you say, but how clearly others understand and connect with it.
- Leaders must translate vision into action through effective communication.
- Key elements of influential communication:
  - **Clarity** – Be concise. Avoid jargon.
  - **Storytelling** – Stories engage, inspire, and make ideas memorable.
  - **Feedback & Adaptability** – Communication is a two-way street; listen and adjust.



# The 5 C's of Influence

## Clarity

Set the Vision & Expectations



- Clearly define team objectives and individual roles.
- Eliminate confusion by simplifying processes and decisions.
- Use frequent, open communication to reinforce key messages.

## Consistency

Build Trust & Reliability



- Keep promises—if you say you'll do something, follow through.
- Model the behavior you expect from your team.
- Ensure fairness—treat everyone by the same standards.

## Compassion

Lead With Empathy



- Take time to understand individual team members' challenges.
- Be flexible when possible—balance accountability with understanding.
- Provide emotional support and not just performance feedback.

## Coaching

Develop & Elevate Others



- Encourage open dialogue—invite ideas and feedback.
- Empower employees to take ownership of their work.
- Break down silos by promoting cross-functional teamwork.

## Collaboration

Engage & Empower the Team



- Provide regular, constructive feedback—not just during performance reviews.
- Encourage employees to develop new skills and take on challenges.
- Act as a mentor, guiding team members toward their career goals.

Open dialogue and frequent communication eliminate confusion.

**2. Consistency** – Build Trust & Reliability – Consistency is key to credibility. When managers keep promises, model behavior, and treat employees fairly, they foster trust. Inconsistent or unpredictable leaders lose respect and influence.

**3. Compassion** – Lead with Empathy – Empathy drives performance. Understanding individual challenges and supporting employees creates a motivated and loyal team. Balance accountability with compassion to develop resilient, engaged teams.

**4. Collaboration** – Engage & Empower the Team – Influence is not about control but collaboration. Effective leaders create environments where employees feel heard and valued. Inclusive decision-making promotes

buy-in and innovative solutions.

**5. Coaching** – Develop & Elevate Others – True leadership develops people. Managers who coach, mentor, and provide constructive feedback build capable and confident teams. Empowering employees to grow benefits the entire organization.

## Influence is the Future of Leadership

In my 25 years of experience in both the public and private sectors, I've found that influence is the most important tool in a manager's toolbox – far more valuable than authority. Influence is the commodity we trade in with the future workforce, enabling leaders to motivate, engage, and inspire across generations. Federal government

managers who embrace influence will drive engagement, productivity, and innovation. The question is: What influence technique will you implement this week?

Check out more tips, tools, and techniques for management at [AdamHenckler.com](https://www.adamhenckler.com). ●

*Adam Henckler is the Superintendent of Production Engineering and Facilities (Code 980), Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, in Kittery, Maine. He is a member of FMA Chapter 6, Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, and presented at FMA's 2025 National Convention & Management Training Seminar. You can find his videos on YouTube at: <https://www.youtube.com/@AdamHenckler>.*



# FROM COAST TO COAST: A SAMPLING OF RECENT FMA CHAPTER EVENTS

By Carol Green

This summer and fall, FMA Chapters across the country held events featuring networking, philanthropy, goodwill, good times, and lots of golf!

In New England, Chapter 6, Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, Maine/New Hampshire, members were fundraising while enjoying a day on the links and also networking after-hours.

- Chapter 6's annual golf tournament held in August once again raised thousands of dollars for Caravan of Toys, a nonprofit that delivers gifts to 31 social service agencies throughout Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts for kids in need during the holidays.

- "FMA Unplugged" is a new after-hours networking event for the group to discuss workplace issues in a safe environment. The inaugural event was held this summer and

as word continues to spread, larger turnouts are expected at these monthly informal gatherings.

Heading to the Southeast, Chapter 3, Norfolk Naval Shipyard, Virginia, members were partying this summer and will be walking for the cure next month.

- In August, the chapter's monthly meeting was replaced with their Annual Crab Fest where all 752 members were invited to partake in crabs, hot dogs, hamburgers, libations, and more! Games were played, and scholarships were handed out to this year's recipients!

- Members will participate in the Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk, in partnership with the American Red Cross, to raise money and awareness for the cure for breast cancer in November. The group will congregate at the Virginia Beach Boardwalk and walk for a cure!

In the Pacific Northwest, Chapter 14, Puget Sound Naval Shipyard, Washington, members were also hitting the links and fundraising.

- Held in September, the 25th Annual Golf Tournament benefiting their scholarship fund included 80 golfers playing in foursomes with attendees taking home a swag bag. FMA corporate partners Blue Cross Blue Shield, FEDS, GEHA, and GPIS served as some of the event sponsors.

Finally, in the Aloha State, members of Chapter 19, Pearl Harbor Area Shipyard, Hawai'i, stayed engaged at a variety of events held throughout summer and fall, both having fun and giving back to the community.

- Adopt-a-Highway clean up in August
- Blood drives in July and September
- Fishing tournament in July
- Toys for Tots Golf Tournament



## MEMBERS IN ACTION



*Chapter 6 members enjoy dinner together.*



*Chapter 6 members enjoy "FMA Unplugged!"*



*Chapter 19 members and friend are all smiles at Chapter 19's quarterly blood drive.*



*Chapter 19 showing Aloha Spirit while donating blood!*

*continued on next page*



# MEMBERS IN ACTION



*Chapter 19 President Varney Range is presented the Gil Guidry Award by Enrique Sabal.*



*Chapter 14 foursome teeing off to raise scholarship funds.*



*Another confident quartet looking forward to a round of golf benefiting Chapter 14's scholarship fund.*



*One of many smiling foursomes ready to tee off at Chapter 6's annual golf tournament held this summer.*



### How is Your Chapter Gathering in the Remaining Months of 2025?

Whether your chapter plans are cozy, raucous, or philanthropic, let us know how you'll be spending time with one another in October, November, and December! Please send your fall and winter chapter event details and hi-res photos to [cgreen@fedmanagers.org](mailto:cgreen@fedmanagers.org). We'd love to include more chapters in future articles in this magazine as well as on our Facebook page. Your events are an excellent recruitment tool to showcase what a fun, welcoming, and rewarding group FMA is to potential members!

### No Events on Your Schedule Yet?

Think about following Chapter 6's lead and have a casual "FMA Unplugged" networking event at a local restaurant or bar. Invite your chapter members to share workplace successes and challenges over Happy Hour drinks and hors d'oeuvres. This could be a perfect low-cost, high-reward event to jump start your chapter's event calendar for the coming year. ●

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*Carol Green is FMA's Finance & Membership Coordinator and was instrumental to the success of this year's convention.*



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# FMA ANNOUNCEMENTS

Please review the following announcements and make plans to attend FMA's convention. Consider running for a national board position, or nominating a colleague for one of FMA's prestigious awards. You can always visit [www.fedmanagers.org](http://www.fedmanagers.org) for the latest information about FMA. We like to hear from our members, so feel free to drop us a line!

## Send FMA Action Letters

It has been another busy year at the Federal Managers Association, and as a federal manager, we know it has probably been a challenging year for you. At the National Office, we truly appreciate hearing from our members who keep us informed of matters we may not otherwise hear about. The information shared with us directly affects our day-to-day efforts of communicating with Congress and the administration. It also directs our efforts to keep you informed about matters that could affect you and your career. To help us make sure federal managers concerns are heard, we encourage you to proactively communicate with your members of Congress by sending Action Letters or meeting with them in their local offices. FMA members and staff are all on the same team, and the more each of us does, the greater the dividend.

## Attend FMA's National Convention & Management Training Seminar

We are pleased to announce FMA's 88th National Convention and Management Training Seminar will be held March 22-25, 2026, in Alexandria, Virginia. If you have ever visited Old Town Alexandria, then you know that it offers a variety of restaurants and entertainment of all kinds, and it's a great place to bring family and friends for a visit. If you have not visited Alexandria, you'll find it is just a few minutes from Washington, D.C., and full of history in a beautiful setting.

Attending an FMA Convention is a great way to get to know your fellow FMA members working across the federal government. Of course, we will conduct high-quality management training and will also visit our legislators on Capitol Hill to

educate them on issues important to you and your career.

Start making plans now to attend. You'll find the most current information on the FMA website at: [www.fedmanagers.org/events](http://www.fedmanagers.org/events). Please join us!

## National Executive Board Elections

The positions of FMA National President, National Secretary, Region 1 Director, and Region 3 Director are up for election at the 2026 National Convention. All nominations must be submitted no later than January 19, 2026. Contact Executive Director Todd Wells at [twells@fedmanagers.org](mailto:twells@fedmanagers.org) to express your interest or for more information.

*continued on next page*

EMERGENCY LOANS | DISASTER RELIEF | SCHOLARSHIPS | CHILDCARE SUBSIDIES

## Have you heard about FEEA?

Founded in 1986, the Federal Employee Education and Assistance Fund (FEEA) is the only independent, nonprofit 501c3 national charity by federal employees and for federal employees. Over our thirty year history we have helped more than 50,000 families.



# FEEA

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# MEMBERS IN ACTION

## FMA Award Nominations

Do you know an outstanding federal manager who deserves to be recognized for their service? Work with your Chapter President to nominate them for an FMA award. Chapters should submit nominations for FMA's Manager of the Year and Gil Guidry Award to their respective Region Director no later than February 6, 2026. Each chapter may submit one nomination for each award. To learn more about these awards, and the nominating process, visit: [fedmanagers.org/awards](https://www.fedmanagers.org/awards). Region Directors' contact information may be found at: [fedmanagers.org/Contact-Us](https://www.fedmanagers.org/Contact-Us). Help us celebrate our outstanding federal manager members!

## Resolutions

FMA welcomes proposed resolutions from

our members to identify matters of concern to be addressed by the Association. Please discuss resolutions with your chapter leaders prior to submission to ensure the chapter stands behind the resolution and will be ready to speak to it at the convention.

Resolutions must be submitted to the National Office no later than February 6, 2026. Forward resolutions to Greg Stanford, Director of Government Affairs, at [gstanford@fedmanagers.org](mailto:gstanford@fedmanagers.org).

## We Need Your Personal Email and Cell Phone Number

With more departments and agencies blocking or stripping FMA's emails prior to you receiving them, we are looking for alternative ways to successfully communicate with our members. In that effort, we are asking that every member provide us with

their personal, non-governmental email address. If you have already provided this, then you do not need to do anything.

We are also collecting cell phone numbers so that in the future we may send you text message alerts regarding major events or request you send your elected representatives action letters in a timely manner.

To update your FMA profile, visit [www.fedmanagers.org](https://www.fedmanagers.org). At the top right of the page, click on the Profile icon and then click on "Login." Enter your Username and Password. Then click on "Edit Your Profile" at the top, right of the page. You may also provide this information by emailing us at [info@fedmanagers.org](mailto:info@fedmanagers.org), or calling us at 703.683.8700. If you have forgotten your password, you can recover it from the Login page.

With your updated information, we will be better able to keep you informed about the vital work of FMA. Thank you! ●

## Make an Impact: Donate to FMA-PAC

PAC funds allow FMA to send you and your colleagues to intimate events with your Senators and Representative to educate them about what it is like to be a federal manager in their state and district.

Visit [www.fedmanagers.org/FMA-PAC](https://www.fedmanagers.org/FMA-PAC) for info on how you can contribute!

To learn more about FMA's government affairs and FMA-PAC related activities, contact Director of Government Affairs Greg Stanford at [gstanford@fedmanagers.org](mailto:gstanford@fedmanagers.org), or call 703.683.8700.





# DONATE TODAY!

## **SUPPORT THE FMA-FEEA SCHOLARSHIP FUND!**

FMA members and their families are eligible to apply for scholarships to help with higher education costs. One application will place the applicant under consideration for both FMA scholarships and FEEA scholarships!

### **CONTRIBUTIONS ARE NEEDED!**

You may make individual contributions, or Chapter contributions. Chapters might consider holding fundraisers and making contributions in honor of an individual for special recognition.

For more information, visit: [FEDMANAGERS.ORG/SCHOLARSHIPS](https://FEDMANAGERS.ORG/SCHOLARSHIPS)

All donations are tax deductible.

## ACHIEVEMENTS



**KENNAN HEROD-VIDAL WINS  
FMA-FEEA SCHOLARSHIP!**



The Federal Managers Association is pleased to announce Kennan Herod-Vidal as this year's FMA Scholarship winner! Funded by donations from FMA members, this merit-based scholarship is awarded through the Federal Employee Education & Assistance Fund (FEEA) scholarship program. FEEA is the official charity of FMA, and we enthusiastically support their work of "Helping Federal Public Servants in Need."

This fall, Kennan is excited to begin attending the University of Texas at

Dallas where she plans to study Computer Engineering. When asked where she sees herself in five years, she responded, "I see myself completing a master's in computer engineering while gaining industry experience through an internship and working on my thesis. I have always found the most fulfillment in leadership roles, so my goal is to become a team lead or manager at a company like NVIDIA. From there, I want to work towards leading a team to be a leading force of innovation in chip technological progress."

You can read Kennan's winning essay below.

Kennan's mother is Monica Herod, a Dallas Territory Manager of the IRS Small Business/Self-Employed Field Collection Division, and a proud FMA Member at Large.

FMA is excited to assist Kennan in her educational career and wishes her all the best! If you or a family member are interested in applying for a scholarship, please visit <https://www.fedmanagers.org/Scholarships>. The application process for the 2026 program will open in November 2025.

## Essay Question: *Is job satisfaction or job security more important? Which one are you striving for or did you already choose, and why?*



Growing up, I often heard stories from my family and the media about the "starving artist," people who went into fulfilling jobs but struggled to make ends meet. At the same time, I saw my friends' parents in stable, well-paying jobs who seemed stuck in careers they had no interest in. It was this contrast that always made me conflicted on whether or not to pursue job security or satisfaction because while both are important, the truth is that most people won't have access to careers that have both.

I have often brought up this topic in my conversations with friends, where I've noticed that cultural perspectives often shape how people view the balance between satisfaction and security. Many of my friends from Asian backgrounds stress the importance of job stability, viewing it as essential to long-term success. Meanwhile, many of my Hispanic friends have a different perspective, emphasizing the importance of personal fulfillment in hard work and dedication, believing that passion and commitment naturally lead to success. It was hearing these different perspectives that pushed me to rethink my own views.

This is why I leaned toward the security mindset first: what good is a job you love if it can't support you? But the more I thought

about it, the more I realized that passion and job security aren't as separate as they seem. People who love what they do tend to push themselves further, excel in their roles, and ultimately become more valuable employees: naturally increasing their job security. A passionate teacher inspires students and improves outcomes, making themselves an irreplaceable part of the school. Likewise, an engineer who genuinely enjoys solving problems will stand out in their company, making it harder to justify replacing them.

That's why, for me, job satisfaction is the priority. I want to wake up excited about the work I do, knowing it challenges and fulfills me. That's a big reason why I want to pursue a degree in computer engineering. The field constantly evolves, demanding innovation and adaptability. While job security can never be guaranteed in such a fast-changing industry, my passion and dedication will allow me to grow and thrive. If I love what I do, I'll naturally strive to improve, making myself indispensable in any role I take.

At the end of the day, job security is important, but job satisfaction is what makes a career truly meaningful. Feeling safe in a job is great, but feeling inspired by it is even better. And in many ways, being passionate about your work is the best way to secure your future. That's why I choose job satisfaction as my priority, knowing that security will follow when I excel in what I love. ●



**SAFEGUARDING SERVICE:  
WHY CONGRESS MUST ACT  
ON FEDERAL PAY, BENEFITS,  
AND JOB SECURITY**



## By Greg Stanford

As I alluded to over the summer, it has been a whirlwind advocating for federal managers this year. While my last column began with a deep breath and some venting, I'm pleased to kick this column off with a celebration.

When the last issue of *The Federal Manager* was published, the House of Representatives had passed its version of the One Big, Beautiful Act (H.R. 1), but the Senate was still working on its version and there was a lot more work to be done.

You all know by now that the Senate narrowly passed its version of the bill and President Trump signed it into law on July 4. While some details about what was included in the final package have been slow to emerge, from FMA's perspective, there is much to celebrate.

FMA successfully prevented all of the most egregious cuts to federal employee benefits, eliminating provisions that were broken promises that would have pulled the rug out from under feds. The proposals were bad policy for all feds, and particularly to those who are at or near retirement age. And while it has been several months since these provisions were eliminated from the One Big Beautiful Bill, I think it is important to spell them out and consider how close we were to having them decimate your retirement packages.

The reality is most of these provisions had been proposed before, and it's entirely possible they could return in another package down the road, too. But for now, we celebrate that these provisions did not make the final package:

- Increases to pension contributions for all feds – not just new hires
- Shift from High-3 to High-5 to calculate your federal annuity
- Elimination of the Federal Employee

### Retirement System (FERS) Annuity Supplement

- New hires are at-will unless they elect to pay 5 percent more of pay toward pension (House version)
- New hires are at-will unless they pay 14.4 percent toward FERS (Senate version)
- Fee for federal employees appealing a case to the Merit Systems Protection Board
- 10 percent fee on dues payroll deductions (would have cost FMA an estimated \$45,000 each year)



## One Percent Pay Raise on Tap for 2026 – FMA Urges Pay Parity

On August 28, President Trump used his authority to recommend an alternative pay plan of his choosing for 2026, formally calling for a 1 percent pay raise for the federal workforce.

In a statement, FMA National President

Craig Carter wrote, “A one percent raise is better than nothing, and given the lack of discussion about pay all year we had been bracing for a pay freeze. Regrettably, a 1 percent pay raise is nowhere near the rising inflation levels. And it would ensure feds would fall even further behind their private sector counterparts when it comes to compensation, when feds already make almost 25 percent less.”

Carter noted the uniformed military is slated to receive a 3.8 percent raise in 2026 and said federal employees deserve the long-standing established tradition of pay parity with military service members.

“Maintaining the traditional pay parity between federal employees and the uniformed military is essential to ensuring fairness, stability, and the recruitment and retention of a highly skilled civilian workforce,” Carter wrote. “Federal employees take the same oath to the Constitution and work side by side with military personnel in supporting national security, public safety, and critical government services, and their contributions should be valued equally . . . Federal employees deserve to be treated with respect for their efforts and the dedicated work they perform. It is not too much to ask that, in return, feds be given the ability to maintain a living wage that keeps up with inflation and that provides for them and their families.”

Congress could pass legislation counter to President Trump's pay plan. He proposed a pay freeze in each year of his first term, either in his initial budget request or during the appropriations process, but was overruled by Congress each time, resulting in raises ranging from 1 percent to 2.6 percent. However, we do not expect Congress to overrule President Trump on the 1 percent raise for 2026.

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President Biden provided feds a 2 percent pay raise in 2025 and a 5.2 percent raise in 2024 – the largest raise since 1980. The last pay freeze that was actually implemented was from 2011-2013, under President Barack Obama.

FMA endorsed the Federal Adjustment of Income Rates (FAIR) Act, legislation introduced in January 2025, at the beginning of the 119th Congress, by Sen. Brian Schatz (D-HI) and the late-Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-VA), which would provide for a 4.3 percent raise. More recently, as FMA President Carter called for, FMA modified our advocacy efforts to push for feds to receive a 3.8 percent pay raise – just like the uniformed military.

## FEPCA

Theoretically, federal employees' annual raises should require no action either by the President or Congress. The annual boost is supposed to be implemented automatically at the end of each calendar year with the amount directly linked to the Employment Cost Index (ECI).

In 1990 Congress passed, and President George H.W. Bush signed, the Federal

Employee Pay Comparability Act (FEPCA). The act links federal employees' annual raises to the ECI, which is a private sector wage index. The ECI is produced by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and measures the change in the hourly labor cost to employers over time. The ECI uses a fixed "basket" of labor to produce a pure cost change, free from the effects of workers moving between occupations and industries and includes both the cost of wages and salaries and the cost of benefits.

However, the FEPCA includes a provision that allows the President to submit an "alternative pay plan," lower than the FEPCA formula – or a pay freeze – due to "national emergency or serious economic conditions affecting the general welfare." Every president, Republican and Democratic, for the past thirty years has exercised that emergency provision, due to the cost of implementation of FEPCA, issuing an alternative pay plan to Congress by August 31.

"Without this alternative pay plan, under current law, locality pay would increase an average of 18.88 percent, costing \$24 billion in the first year alone," Trump wrote in his transmittal to Congress. "This change would go into effect in January 2026 along with an additional 3.3 percent across-the-board increase for the base General Schedule."

The President needs to issue an executive order in December to officially implement the alternative plan.

## FMA on Offense

In a year that began with FMA at the White House, applauding the signing of the Social Security Fairness Act into law – an FMA issue brief for at least 20 years – it feels like we have been playing defense ever

since. And while our defensive, responsive posture has been necessary and warranted, I want to share the status on some of the issues from our legislative agenda we are pushing to make a positive difference for managers in the federal workforce.

## Equal COLA Act (H.R. 491 / S. 624)

FERS Cost of Living Adjustments (COLAs) are artificially reduced any time the Civil Service Retirement System COLA is above 1 percent. When the CPI-W increase is 3 percent or greater, the FERS COLA is reduced by 1 percent. If the CPI-W is between 2 and 3 percent, like the 2.5 percent for 2025, FERS retirees see a 2 percent COLA, and when the CPI-W is less than 2 percent, the COLA is equal to the price index. Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-VA) and Sen. Alex Padilla (D-CA) introduced the Equal COLA Act (H.R. 491 / S. 624), which would bring equity to the way the COLAs are determined for all federal retirees.

The House bill has 53 bipartisan cosponsors, and the Senate version has 14 cosponsors – 12 Democrats and two Independents

## Federal Retirement Fairness Act (H.R. 1522)

Former Congressman Derek Kilmer (D-WA) was FMA's lead champion on the Federal Retirement Fairness Act for many years, but he did not run for reelection in the 119th Congress. However, Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-VA) reintroduced the legislation (H. R. 1522) in the current session, along with Reps. David Valadao (R-CA), Nikki Budzinski (D-IL), and Don Bacon (R-NE).

This FMA-endorsed, bipartisan bill would allow FERS employees to buy back years served as temporary employees to credit toward their retirement. The bill already has 102 bipartisan cosponsors in the 119th Congress and we are working to build more support for the bill. We are also looking to get a companion bill introduced in the Senate.

*continued on page 33*



# SEND ACTION LETTERS

Do you want to get involved and help the FMA national office make a difference for you and your fellow managers on Capitol Hill? A key way is to send action letters to your Representatives and Senators on issues that matter to you.

These letters, prepared by FMA staff, are available in the legislative action center on our website: [fedmanagers.org/Action-Letters](http://fedmanagers.org/Action-Letters). Letters can be easily sent to both of your U.S. Senators and your Representative, and are ready to send in a matter of seconds.

All action letters are ready to send, but can be edited to allow you to personalize and insert any anecdotal information you would like to add. Action Letters are a great way to make your voice heard on issues important to federal managers. It is important that you and fellow FMA members maximize our strength in numbers and let your elected officials know what matters to you as a federal manager. ●



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# CAPITAL INSIGHTS

On July 4, 2025, President Trump signed his signature “One Big Beautiful Act” (H.R. 1) into law. The bill creates or extends significant tax cuts and provides hundreds of billions of dollars of increased spending on defense, border security and energy dominance. The final score from the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office estimates the bill will add \$3.3 trillion to the national debt over the next ten years.

In a major development, and good news for federal managers, the overwhelming bulk of cuts to federal workforce retirement benefits were removed prior to the bill’s final passage. FMA worked for months in opposition to provisions that targeted retirement benefits and civil service protections, which were ultimately eliminated. FMA successfully advocated for the removal of provisions to increase pension contributions for all Federal Employees’ Retirement System (FERS) employees, to change the annuity calculation from the High-3 to the High-5, and to eliminate the FERS annuity supplement. Provisions requiring a filing fee to appeal cases to the Merit Systems Protection Board and to make feds at-will employees unless they contribute even more toward their pensions – additional provisions FMA opposed – were also eliminated. ●

In June, Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Acting Director Charles Ezell issued a memo titled “Performance Management for Federal Employees,” aimed at driving a “high-performance, high-accountability” culture in the federal workforce. The memo outlines new standards across the government for performance management, awards programs, and resolving poor performance.

“For many decades now, performance management across the federal workforce has fallen short of what the American people should expect,” Ezell wrote. “Too often, this has resulted in a lack of accountability and inflated performance ratings. Federal employee performance ratings should be normalized and reflect individual contributions to organizational results and outcomes.”

To view the full memo, [click here](#).

The new rules are part of the Trump Administration’s effort to end inflation of employee performance ratings, hold employees accountable, and prevent and address unacceptable job performance. The memo requires all agencies to transition to this performance appraisal cycle by October 1, 2026 – the beginning of Fiscal Year 2027. ●

The Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB), the panel created to adjudicate federal employee appeals to firings and other disciplinary actions against feds, is facing an unprecedented spike in cases and still has no quorum to resolve cases.

The three-person board has only one board member, after President Trump fired Cathy Harris – whose term was supposed to run through March 2028 – and Raymond Limon’s retirement. That leaves Henry Kerner the lone Senate-confirmed board member. The agency’s administrative judges can hear cases, and issue initial decisions, however the board cannot finalize any cases without a quorum. The body did not have a quorum from 2017 to 2022, resulting in a backlog of nearly 3,800 cases.

MSPB recently reported it has received nearly 12,000 appeals in Fiscal Year 2025. The agency received less than half that number of appeals in Fiscal Year 2024. ●



## Protecting Public Naval Shipyards Act (S. 2648)

Federal employees at the nation's four public shipyards would be exempt from any hiring freeze or workforce reductions related to spending cuts, reprogramming of funds, or the probationary status of employees under new legislation introduced on August 1 by Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH). FMA swiftly endorsed the Protecting Public Naval Shipyards (PNSY) Act (S. 2648), which is cosponsored by Sens. Susan Collins (R-ME), Maggie Hassan (D-NH), and Angus King (I-ME).

The Protecting PNSY Act would require the Department of Defense to exempt positions at the four public shipyards – Portsmouth, Norfolk, Puget Sound, and Pearl Harbor – from workforce reductions that are critical to maintenance and that support the Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Program (SIOP).

The bill specifically names the following public shipyard roles:

1. Welders
2. Pipefitters
3. Shipfitters
4. Radiological technicians and engineers
5. Engineers and engineer technicians
6. Apprentices
7. Positions supporting a workforce development pipeline
8. Positions supporting nuclear maintenance and refueling
9. Mechanics
10. Painters and blasters
11. Positions supporting maintenance and operations of infrastructure
12. Positions supporting implementation of the SIOP

In addition, the bipartisan bill would remove hiring limits for these positions. The federal workforce is currently under a hiring freeze, with certain exemptions, through

October 15, 2025.

As we have seen with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) bringing back employees who were terminated or otherwise separated from service earlier in 2025, the federal government needs people to function. FMA will support the Protecting PSNY Act and other efforts to ensure all agencies and departments have the personnel and resources they need to effectively provide services Americans rely on.

You can learn more and keep updated on the status of all of these bills by visiting FMA's legislative tracker or at [Congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov).

Thank you for your membership in FMA and please keep me posted on issues that impact you, your families, your community and your agency. It's an honor to represent you in Washington, D.C. ●

*Greg Stanford is Director of Government and Public Affairs for the Federal Managers Association.*



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# MEET YOUR LEGISLATORS



## U.S. SENATOR JOHN FETTERMAN (D-Pennsylvania)

The senior Senator from the commonwealth of Pennsylvania, John Fetterman serves as the Ranking Member of the Senate subcommittee that covers federal manager issues. Bringing his own style to the “World’s Greatest Deliberative Body,” Fetterman represents FMA members of Chapter 208 (Defense Logistics Agency, Philadelphia), as well as members of the IRS, Social Security Administration and more.

As the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Border Management, Federal Workforce and Regulatory Affairs, Fetterman has a leadership role in all legislative matters pertaining to FMA’s legislative interests. In the 119th Congress, Fetterman has cosponsored legislation to provide a reasonable pay raise to federal employees in 2026 (S. 126), the Equal COLA Act (S. 624), and the Saving the Civil Service Act (S. 134), all of which are endorsed by FMA.

Prior to his election to the U.S. Senate, Fetterman served as the 34th Lieutenant Governor of Pennsylvania from 2019-2023, and as Mayor of Braddock, a borough in the suburbs of Pittsburgh, from 2006-2019. While serving as Mayor, he also directed Braddock’s youth program and founded Braddock Redux, a non-profit organization to protect properties in the borough. He began his career as an insurance risk management underwriter before joining the newly formed Americorps, where he taught students who were pursuing their GED.

Born in West Reading and raised in York, Sen. Fetterman earned a bachelor’s degree from, and played football for, Albright College. He later received an MBA from the University of Connecticut and a Masters in Public Policy from Harvard.

Fetterman is married and has three children. ●

### THE FACTS:

**Birthplace:** West Reading, Pennsylvania

**Born:** August 15, 1969

**Education:** Albright College, B.S., 1991;  
University of Connecticut, M.B.A., 1993;  
Harvard University, M.P.P., 1999

**Career:**

- United States Senate, Pennsylvania, (2023-Present)
- Lieutenant Governor of Pennsylvania (2019-2023)
- Mayor of Braddock, Pennsylvania (2006-2019)
- Nonprofit Executive
- Americorps Volunteer
- Insurance Risk Management Underwriter

**Elected:** 2022 (1st term)

**Committees:**

- Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry
  - Commodities, Derivatives, Risk Management, and Trade
  - Food and Nutrition, Specialty Crops, Organics, and Research
- Commerce, Science and Transportation
  - Aviation, Space, and Innovation
  - Telecommunications and Media
- Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
  - Border Management, Federal Workforce, and Regulatory Affairs (Ranking Member)
  - Permanent Investigations

**Contact Information:**

U.S. Senate  
142 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510  
Phone: 202.224.4254  
Website: <http://fetterman.senate.gov>



## U.S. SENATOR ASHLEY MOODY (R-Florida)



Ashley Moody, the junior senator from Florida, was appointed in January 2025 to fill the vacancy created when Marco Rubio resigned to be U.S. Secretary of State. Sen. Moody may serve until January 2027 and will need to win a special election in November 2026 to remain in office after that. Moody represents many FMA members, including naval Chapters 11 and 396 in the Jacksonville area.

Among Senator Moody's committee assignments, she serves on the Senate Subcommittee on Border Management, Federal Workforce, and Regulatory Affairs, which has primary jurisdiction over many of FMA's issues. In addition to this role on the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, Moody was tapped for the Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, the Committee on the Judiciary, the Joint Economic Committee and the Special Committee on Aging.

Moody was elected as Florida's Attorney General from 2019 until her 2025 appointment to the U.S. Senate. She was twice elected to serve as a circuit court judge before terms as Attorney General, and worked as an Assistant U.S. Attorney. Earlier in her career, Moody worked as an attorney for the firm Holland & Knight.

A native of Plant City, Florida, Moody graduated from the University of Florida with bachelor's and master's Degrees and a Juris Doctor from the University of Florida's School of Law. She also earned a Master of Laws degree from Stetson University School of Law.

Senator Moody is married to Justin Duralia and they have two children. ●

### THE FACTS:

**Birthplace:** Plant City, Florida

**Born:** March 28, 1975

**Education:** University of Florida, B.S., 1996; M.A., 2000; J.D., 2000; Stetson University, LL.M., 2010

**Career:**

- U.S. Senator, Florida (2025-Present)
- Attorney General of Florida (2019-2025)
- Hillsborough County, Florida, Circuit Court Judge (2007-2017)
- Assistant U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Florida

**Appointed:** 2025 (1st Term)

**Committees:**

- Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
  - Children and Families
  - Primary Health and Retirement Security
- Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
  - Border Management, Federal Workforce, and Regulatory Affairs
  - Disaster Management, District of Columbia, and Census
- Judiciary
  - Antitrust, Competition Policy, and Consumer Rights
  - Border Security and Immigration
  - Intellectual Property
  - Privacy, Technology, and the Law
- Senate Special Committee on Aging
- Joint Economic Committee

**Contact Information:**

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# MAINTAINING A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE BY MANAGING STRESS

By Doreen England

We all experience stress at home, at work, and on the road. We might get extremely anxious as a result of a negative relationship with someone, too much work, or everyday annoyances such as being trapped in traffic. How you manage and alleviate stress in your life is the key to maintaining great health.

Stress is defined as a feeling of emotional or physical tension. It can come from any event or thought that makes you feel frustrated, angry, or nervous. Stress is your body's

reaction to a challenge or demand. In short bursts, stress can be positive, such as when it helps you avoid danger or meet a deadline. The key is to find a balance between wellness and stress levels in your life.

So, how do you know you are under stress? Most people accept high stress as the “norm” and when asked, will tell you they are handling it just fine. But are they really? Did you know the most common signs that you are under stress are:

- Consistent headaches
- Neck pain/tightness
- Sleep problems
- Depression and anxiety
- Short fuse/overreacting
- Autoimmune diseases
- Digestive problems
- Skin conditions, such as eczema
- Heart disease
- Weight problems
- Thinking and memory problems



So, what can you do to manage all the stressors in your life? Here are a few ideas.

## Exercise

Simple day-to-day tasks can relieve your stress in just 20 minutes – even if it's something as simple as leaving your desk and going for a short walk, standing up and doing a few stretches, or working out during lunch. Physical activity helps restore the body and mind.

Do you need more motivation to exercise and relieve stress? Join a community exercise class. Whether it's aerobics, Zumba, kettlebell, kickboxing or just walking, exercising as a group offers accountability, friendship, and inspiration to keep going! Exercise classes are offered in virtually every town and are an inexpensive way to work off stress, meet new friends, socialize, and maintain your health.

## Get Organized

Create a schedule for yourself at work and at home. This will help you prioritize your to-do list, will stop you from being reactive and help you be more proactive. If you are in a constant state of reacting to all your tasks, chaos will ensue, and stress levels will skyrocket. Knowing your deadlines and what you are supposed to do will help you maintain focus and lead to healthy accomplishments.

## Eat A Healthy Diet

Your diet affects every aspect of your health, including your mental health. Did you know that people who follow a diet high in ultra-processed foods and added sugar are more likely to experience higher perceived stress levels? Following a nutrient-dense diet and limiting ultra-processed foods may provide your body with the nutrients it needs for optimal health and decrease your risk of deficiencies in nutrients that help regulate stress.



your personal and professional life may help reduce stress and protect your mental health. Learn to say “no” more often. This is especially true if you find yourself taking on more than you can handle, because juggling many responsibilities may leave you feeling overwhelmed.

Being selective about what you take on and saying “no” to things that will unnecessarily add to your load can reduce your stress levels.

## Create Boundaries

Knowing what you are capable of, especially with people who add to your stress levels, is a healthy way to protect your well-being. This can be as simple as asking a friend or family member not to stop by unannounced or canceling standing plans with a friend who tends to create drama.

## Unplug

Make it a priority to shut off from work. When you get home, disconnect from the computer, cell phone, and everything else that connects you to work. Learn to realize there is a life-work balance that must be maintained.

## Take Time for Yourself

Take leave to regroup, refocus, energize, relax, and enjoy life. That old saying “all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy” is very true. You have to have a release. Work and a constant “go-go” mentality takes its toll on your mind and body. When you take leave, turn off your phone. Your leave is your time, do not share it with anyone. Turn off your computer. Leaving it on adds to feelings of being obligated to check in. In order to maintain a work-life balance, you need to establish a work-life disconnect.

## Learn to Say No

This is probably one of the hardest words for people to say at work or with family and friends. Not all stressors are within your control, but some are. Taking control over

In conclusion, remember the four A's of stress management.

- Avoid unnecessary stress by saying no to objects and situations that prevent you from doing your task.
- Alter the situation. Turn the situation into a positive experience by communicating your feelings, opening and establishing boundaries in advance.
- Adapt to the stressor. If you can't avoid a stressor, find ways to adapt by adjusting your standards and reframing the issue. And finally,
- Accept the unchangeable. You can't control everything, all the time. You must learn to accept what you can't change and change the things you can. Practice positive self-talk and learn from your mistakes.

We live in a chaotic, stress-filled world. Managing the stress in your life will help you become happier and healthier. ●

---

*Doreen England is FMA Region 3 Director, as well as President of Chapter 170, Naval Weapons Center, in Crane, Indiana.*

**RETIREES**

# **RETIREE MATTERS**

By Christine Parker





Fellow FMA members, and prospective members,

Thank you for reading what I have to share with you about federal retirees and our retirement benefits. There are many topics that affect retirees, and this column is by no means all-inclusive. Keep an eye on your e-mail and FMA's website for continuing news on issues important to our community, including legislative updates. And always feel free to contact me or Greg Stanford, Director of Government and Public Affairs, if you have any questions or concerns.

We've experienced another quarter of radical changes to our federal employees and retirees. Changes continue to be fast-paced and significant. Stay informed on what affects you in order to make the smartest decisions for your needs.

## Reductions in Force (RIFs)

A Supreme Court decision cleared the way for mass layoffs across more than 20 federal agencies. As many as 275,000 federal employees may be impacted by these reductions-in-force (RIFs), with thousands already receiving notices. In fact, it was announced on Friday, July 11, that the State Department has already begun laying off more than 1,300 civil servants and foreign service officers.

If you're concerned about your job security or your retirement plans, now is the time to take action. Stay tuned in to your chain of command for the possibility of a RIF.

According to FedSmith, federal retirement claims soared in May and June 2025, causing the largest mid-year spike in the OPM retirement backlog in six years, with a 22 percent increase in June alone.

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management develops policy and provides guidance to federal agencies regarding Reductions in Force (RIF). This page serves as a portal to assist you in locating pertinent information and content related to RIFs in the federal government. Read more here: <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/workforce-restructuring/reductions-in-force-rif/>.

## Social Security Part 1 – New Law

The signing into law of new legislation (the One Big Beautiful Bill) will bring tax savings to many seniors who receive Social Security retirement benefits. The bill provides a tax deduction of \$6,000 to seniors with individual incomes of up to \$75,000 or joint incomes of up to \$150,000 per year. The deduction is reduced for incomes above that level and phased out altogether for seniors with individual incomes exceeding \$175,000 or \$250,000 jointly. "The provision does not entirely end taxes on Social Security," The Senior Citizens League, a non-partisan seniors group, posted on July 9. "Still, it would zero out the Social Security tax burden for 88 percent of seniors, according to an estimate by President Trump's Council of Economic Advisers. That's up from 64 percent of seniors who are currently exempt from Social Security taxes, meaning about 14 million additional seniors will benefit from the change." The tax relief is essentially an addition to the existing standard deduction for those 65 and older, and will be available from 2025 through 2028.

Seniors can currently claim a standard deduction of \$15,000 (or \$30,000 for couples), plus an additional senior-specific deduction of \$2,000 (or \$3,600 for couples). The bill raises the standard deduction by a few hundred dollars.

Eligible tax filers can take the extra tax deduction whether they itemize deductions on their returns or not. Read more here: <https://www.myfederalretirement.com/social-security-tax-relief/>.



## Social Security, Part 2 – Bill Reintroduced to Eliminate Income Tax on Social Security Benefits

Congressman Thomas Massie (R-KY) reintroduced legislation that would eliminate income taxes on Social Security benefits. According to a press statement from Massie, if passed, the Senior Citizens Tax Elimination Act (HR 1040) will amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to terminate the inclusion of Tier I railroad retirement benefits and Social Security benefits in an individual's gross income. "As this legislation takes effect, seniors will notice their tax liability is significantly reduced and will no longer deal with the 'double tax' on their federally earned benefits," Massie said. You can read more here: <https://www.myfederalretirement.com/hr-1040-social-security/>.

*continued on next page*



TSP and other traditional qualified retirement plans they may own. (NOTE: a “required beginning date” refers to Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs), which are the minimum amounts you must withdraw from your tax-deferred retirement accounts, such as traditional IRAs and 401(k) plans, starting at age 73. If you continue to work, you want to consider

whether or not you should also consider the added tax responsibility that would come with an RMD payment.)

(5) Eligibility to continue contributing to the TSP.

You can read more details here: <https://www.myfederalretirement.com/social-security-65/>.

Write to your members of Congress and ask them to support Rep. Massie’s bill.

## Benefits to Waiting to Retire

When considering working in federal service past age 65, federal employees should consider five enhanced retirement-related benefits for their possible post-age 65 federal employment. They are:

(1) Postponing the start of monthly Social Security retirement benefits in order to maximize lifetime benefits.

(2) Their Federal Employee Health Benefits (FEHB) insurance enrollment and postponed Medicare enrollment.

(3) Their eligibility to be enrolled in the health care flexible spending account (HCFSA) or continue to be enrolled and contribute to their Health Savings Account (HSA).

(4) If they continue working in federal service and reach their “required beginning date” and being able to delay required minimum distributions from their traditional

2026,” after 12 August, you should see the increase.

## Resources for You as an FMA Member

Because you are a member of FMA, you are able to receive the services of our corporate partners. One of FMA’s corporate partners is GPIS. If you’re considering retirement, or already retired, an Employee Benefits Specialist with GPIS can help you do the research so that you may choose the best option for you. They will provide a free retirement analysis, and make recommendations. You are not obligated to GPIS to implement the recommendations. You can contact GPIS at [info@gpis4u.org](mailto:info@gpis4u.org), call 866.201.7829. Visit their website at: [gpis4u.org](http://gpis4u.org).

## Make Your Voice Heard!

Make Your Voice Heard! Use your freedom of speech as a retiree to speak up and get involved. Check out the Legislative Action Center on the FMA website. And please take the time to send Action Letters to your Representative and Senators. The FMA website makes it easy and efficient to send communications to Capitol Hill. To send prepared Action Letters, visit: [fedmanagers.org/Action-Letters](http://fedmanagers.org/Action-Letters). And make sure to visit your elected representatives at their local offices or schedule a virtual meeting.

As always, thank you for reading this column! It is my absolute pleasure to share useful and interesting information with my fellow retired federal managers, and I welcome your feedback, questions, and ideas for future topics. Please reach out to me anytime at [FMA121Parker@gmail.com](mailto:FMA121Parker@gmail.com).

## 2026 COLA

Each year’s cost of living adjustment (COLA) is determined by comparing the change in the CPI-W from year to year, based on the average of the third-quarter months of July, August, and September. The baseline CPI-W for the last fiscal year is 308.729.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the CPI-W is the current index used for measuring increases in the prices of consumer goods, including food and beverages, housing, clothing, transportation, medical care, recreation, education, communication, and more.

As of June, 2025, the trend toward a 2026 COLA is:  $(315.945 - 308.729) / 308.729 \times 100 = 2.337$  (adjusted to the nearest 1/10 of 1 percent = 2.3%).

The Consumer Price Index for July 2025 is scheduled to be released on August 12, 2025. If you do a search “COLA for federal workers

*Christine Parker is FMA’s Retiree Conference Chair and National Vice President.*





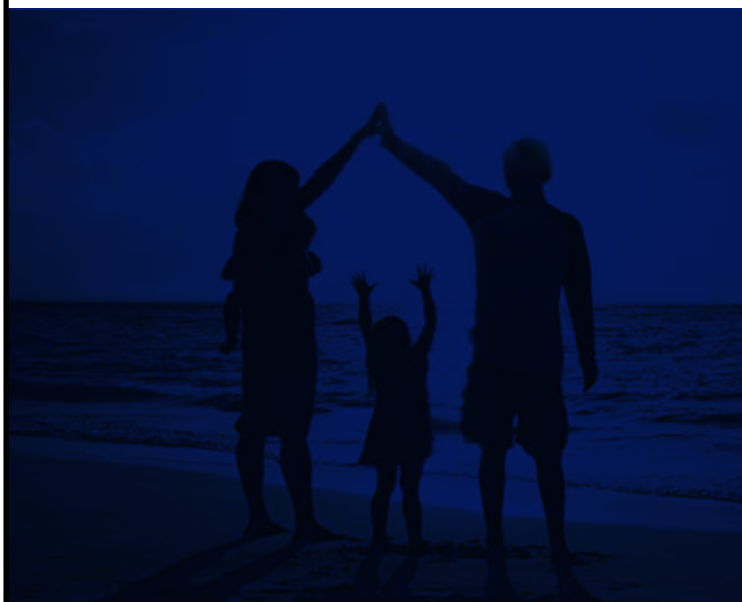
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This is a summary of the features of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Service Benefit Plan. Before making a final decision, please read the Plan's Federal brochure (RI 71-005). All benefits are subject to the definitions, limitations and exclusions set forth in the Federal brochure.

**Open Season is November 10 – December 8**