



SAMUEL J. HEYMAN SERVICE TO AMERICA MEDALS AWARDED

Trust Building
and Trust Busting
14

Protecting
Federal Managers
in a Shutdown
26

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Alexandria, Virginia

March 22 - 25, 2026

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Article Submission

All materials submitted to The Federal Manager should pertain to public service managers. Copy should be double-spaced and no longer than 10 pages. High resolution 300 dpi, color images in JPG or TIF format, as well as charts, or illustrations in EPS vector format, should be included if possible. Text should be submitted by email or on compact disc. Please also include a biography of the author.



COVER

6

SAMUEL J. HEYMAN SERVICE TO AMERICA MEDALS AWARDED

From Our President 5
No More Shutdowns!

Feature 14
Trust Building and
Trust Busting

Members in Action 20
Action Letter August
and More!

Defense Logistics Agency
Chapter Celebrates with
a Fall Fling!
FMA Announcements

FMA at Work 26
Protecting Federal
Managers in a Shutdown

Capital Insights 30

Meet Your Legislators 32
U.S. Representatives
Kiggans and Walkinshaw

Health & Wellness 34
Watch Your Health Over
the Holiday Season

Retirees 36
Retiree Matters

Corporate Partners:





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From Our President...

NO MORE SHUTDOWNS!

FMA Family,

I hope you and your families are doing well. It has been a very difficult year for the federal workforce and our country. I wrote in the last issue of *The Federal Manager* magazine that it looked like we were heading for another continuing resolution (CR) as the fiscal year came to an end. I wrote my article over the Labor Day weekend, a full three weeks ahead of the end of fiscal year 2025. As we all know, I was wrong on that prediction because the government of the United States shut down on October 1st.

While CR's are very difficult to work through as a federal employee – working on last year's appropriations, not being able to buy in bulk to save taxpayers money, and not being able plan for upcoming projects and the future – government shutdowns are far worse. It is unfathomable that the greatest, most successful country on earth would ever shut down our own government. The United States federal government should never shut down, PERIOD.

I understand individual FMA members, me included, have different personal political beliefs, and I know some members supported different strategies to end the shutdown. However, I believe the Federal Managers Association official position should always be that our government never shut down for any reason, regardless of which political party is “to blame.” When we have a government shutdown, it weakens our nation. National security is in question, and it jeopardizes other vital programs and services that are stopped or delayed. The citizens of this great country should never be put in danger because our elected officials in Washington, D.C., let politics get in the way of reaching agreement on funding the government.

One of the things about a shutdown that really angers me is that some of our federal workforce are required by law to continue performing their official duties without receiving a paycheck, while members of Congress, who put our nation in this weakened position by not performing their sworn duties to fund our government, continue to receive their regular paychecks. Members of Congress should never receive a paycheck during a government shutdown, and, in my opinion, should not get backpay/retroactive pay after the shutdown ends. I am grateful that all federal employees are guaranteed to receive their backpay upon the government reopening, but extremely upset that employees must struggle to pay their mortgages, childcare, grocery bills, and other monthly expenses during a shutdown, through no fault of their own.

While I pray that members of Congress will agree on the remaining appropriations before the January 30, 2026, deadline when the current CR ends, it wouldn't surprise me if another CR will be agreed upon to carry us through February, or even into March – and I also would

not be totally surprised if we have yet another government shutdown. You can read Greg Stanford's FMA at Work article in this issue to learn about some of the bills we are supporting to provide relief to federal managers in the event of a shutdown, as well as a legislative effort to avert shutdowns altogether.

Every time I talk with members of Congress and their staff, I always mention that Congress should fund the government on time, without a CR, definitely not shut down the government, and they all agree. Well, now is the time to practice what they preach. FMA should not be the only one fighting to end shutdowns. Every citizen should be standing up and saying this is wrong, and taking steps so that Congress is never be able to put our country in such a precarious position again. Please reach out to your senators and representative and tell them to do their sworn duty and fund the government to avoid another government shutdown.

The Federal Managers Association has a very diverse membership with diverse job positions, chapter locations, and agencies and commands. I believe that makes us stronger as an association and that is why we are so often consulted by the Office of Personnel Management, Office of Management and Budget, and members of Congress, about our position on issues pertaining to the federal workforce such as new/ changing regulations, or proposed legislation. And when it comes to matters of issues pertaining to the federal workforce, we will be most effective if we speak with a unified voice.

On another note, FMA's 88th National Convention & Training Seminar will be held March 22-25, 2026, in Alexandria, Virginia. At the national convention attendees get to meet fellow FMA members, the national executive board, as well as the national staff.

We always have a great keynote speaker and managerial training. And the highlight of the week is our *Day on the Hill* when we walk the halls of Congress and speak with our elected officials. I hope you will be able to attend.

As always, I want to thank you for your support of the men and women of our armed forces, your agencies/commands, your communities, FMA, and the United States of America. ●

Sincerely,

Craig Carter
FMA National President

COVER

2025 SAMUEL J. HEYMAN SERVICE TO AMERICA MEDALS TO OUTSTANDING PUBLIC SERVANTS AWARDED



**PARTNERSHIP
FOR PUBLIC SERVICE**



In the midst of significant upheaval for the federal workforce, the nonpartisan, nonprofit Partnership for Public Service presented its 2025 Samuel J. Heyman Service to America Medals® to a group of career federal employees who have provided critical public services and made outstanding contributions to the health, safety and national security of our country.

Considered the “Oscars of government service” and better known as the “Sammies,” the Partnership in June celebrated 23 individuals and teams whose accomplishments demonstrate the vital role that expert, nonpartisan civil servants play in our daily lives.

The 24th annual awards ceremony took place as the Trump administration had begun imposing severe cutbacks to federal personnel and programs and altering the rules governing the apolitical civil service.

“The stories of the dedicated Sammies honorees vividly demonstrate the kinds of services, innovation and benefits that could be lost if the harmful cutbacks continue,” said Max Stier, the president and CEO of the Partnership. “What’s at stake is the importance of ensuring that we have a government that keeps us safe and continues to modernize, not regress, in order to meet the important needs of the American people.”

Stier noted that federal employees across the government, including the honorees,

have been affected by the administration’s workforce disruptions. “For some, the nature of their job and their ability to serve has been upended. Others have seen their agency close, their funding slashed and their programs suspended. Many have been outright fired or pressured into leaving – and even worse could be on the horizon,” Stier said.

Amid these challenges, Stier said the Service to America Medal honorees persevered and accomplished great things, adding that they represent the larger public service community that goes to work every day to improve our lives for the better.

Rather than select individual winners in different categories from the group of finalists as in years past, the Partnership recognized the 2025 honorees and teams together to illustrate the full breadth of what our government does for the nation.

In addition, a prestigious selection committee of academic, entertainment, media and social-sector leaders chose David Lebryk, the former Treasury Department fiscal assistant secretary who was widely recognized as the preeminent leader in federal financial management, as the 2025 Federal Employee of the Year.

During his years of service, Lebryk seamlessly oversaw annual government payments of more than \$6 trillion, protected the integrity of the federal financial system

and implemented a government-wide program that in 2024 recovered a record \$7 billion in fraud and improper payments. Lebryk left the government at the beginning of the Trump administration after refusing to give members of the Department of Government Efficiency access to the sensitive Treasury payment system.

During the awards ceremony, held at the Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg Center in Washington, D.C., the honorees were recognized in three groups: those who have helped solve long-standing challenges; those who have ensured government works better for all of us; and those who have innovated for a better future.

Solving Long-Standing Challenges

Dr. Laura Cheever, formerly with the Health Resources and Services Administration, successfully managed the \$2.6 billion Ryan White/HIV/AIDS program for more than two decades that provided lifesaving care and treatment for millions of low-income, uninsured, and underinsured individuals suffering from HIV/AIDS. The initiative helped move HIV from a death sentence to something more akin to a manageable chronic disease.

Johnie Jenkins at the Department of Agriculture enabled the expansion of the \$21 billion U.S. cotton industry by developing Bt cotton, a variety that is resistant to several key pests and today accounts for 90 percent of U.S. cotton acreage. During his 64-year federal career, Jenkins also developed a fire-resistant cotton variety as well as cotton lines that are used to produce healthy cooking oil.

Kathleen Kirsch at the U.S. Agency for International Development guided critical U.S. efforts to defend and rebuild Ukraine’s energy infrastructure in the face



Max Stier, President & CEO of the Partnership for Public Service, and Amira Boland, recipient of the 2024 Service to America Award for Management Excellence.

continued on next page



The 2025 gala was hosted by broadcast journalist Judy Woodruff.

of devastating Russian attacks, keeping the lights and heat on for millions of Ukrainians, and helping to maintain the country's energy independence.

Alexander Maranghides at the National Institute of Standards and Technology conducted decades of research into how fires that occur in communities adjacent to wildlands spread, what can be done to prevent them, and how to protect life and property. His findings are informing a new methodology that is being used to retrofit housing and update building codes to save lives and property.

Pavan Pidugu at the Department of Transportation revolutionized technology to make our roads safer, spearheading a digital platform that has reduced commercial vehicle inspection times by 40 percent and will save millions of dollars annually, made it easier for examiners to downgrade ineligible drivers in near real-time and modernized DOT's registration system to simplify compliance and prevent fraud.

Christina Ritter, Lara Strawbridge and Daniel Heider at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services oversaw

the first-ever negotiations between Medicare and pharmaceutical companies to lower prescription drug costs. In 2026, the price of the 10 most expensive and dispensed drugs in the Medicare Part D program will drop, saving at least 9 million enrollees \$1.5 billion on medications that treat serious disease. The lower prices could also save the government upwards of \$6 billion. More drugs will be selected for negotiation in 2027 and 2028.

Michael Staudenmaier, Chad Kahler and Mark Loeffelbein at the National Weather Service developed a sophisticated new map that provides a seven-day forecast of possible heat risk at specific locations. Heat is the leading cause of weather-related deaths in the United States. The map is being used by news and weather channels, and by operators of parks, schools, and venues to help Americans stay cool.

Susan Xu at the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health created a more protective glove for over 1 million U.S. firefighters, set safer weight limits for their breathing apparatuses, and developed a sensor that alerts health care workers to mask leakage in real time.

Ensuring Government Works Better

Maya Bretzius at the Internal Revenue Service devised a system that consolidated IRS customer service data into a single platform, enabling representatives to see taxpayer information in one place and that helped reduce wait times for millions of taxpayers seeking assistance.

Lydia Carpenter at the Department of Agriculture established a breakthrough federal program to help prevent, detect, and respond to African Swine Fever, a disease that could ravage the pork industry with the loss of billions of dollars in revenue and tens of thousands of jobs.

Luis Coronado Jr., Matt Pierce, and the Online Passport Renewal Team at the Department of State led the development and implementation of the first-ever online passport renewal system, eliminating an outdated, paper-heavy process and dramatically reducing wait times for



Goldbug Revival, comprised of federal employees, entertains the gathering.

millions of Americans. More than 2 million Americans have used the new system to renew their passports in record time.

Shane P. Harrigan at the Department of Justice litigated and oversaw the prosecution of high-profile criminal cases that involved associates of 9/11 hijackers, human, firearms and drug traffickers, Iranian sanctions, foreign terrorist organizations, and hate crimes during a four-decade federal career.

Renata Miskell, Linda Chero and the Payment Integrity Team at the Department at the Treasury led innovative government initiatives that prevented and recovered a record-breaking \$7 billion in fraud and improper federal payments in fiscal 2024, up from roughly \$650 million in 2023. They also helped more than 60 federal programs verify payee eligibility, identity, and account details, while also enabling state and federal agencies to reduce fraud involving Social Security, veterans' benefits, unemployment insurance and more.

Kris Pasquale, Heather McCormick, Alex Meusbarger, Special Agents at the Small Business Administration's Office of Inspector General, spearheaded a nationwide campaign that has returned more than \$1.2 billion in stolen COVID-19 relief funds to American taxpayers, with additional recoveries on the way.

Innovating for a Better Future

Mary Anne Alvin at the Department of Energy led innovative initiatives to extract scarce rare earth minerals from coal waste that are critical components for everything from military aircraft and electric vehicles to smartphones and medical devices while helping to remediate waste sites and legacy mining across the country.

John A. Blevins at NASA oversaw groundbreaking lunar projects, culminating



with the successful first launch of an uncrewed rocket that orbited the moon, paving the way for new scientific discoveries, further space exploration, and a potential future human mission to Mars.

Richard Burns at NASA led the team behind a spacecraft that brought back the first-ever asteroid sample to Earth, revealing the presence of organic material that may offer clues about the origins of life on our planet.

Thuc Hoang and the Advanced Simulation and Computing Team at the National Nuclear Security Administration led the development of El Capitan, the world's most powerful supercomputer that will conduct nuclear simulations with unprecedented speed and precision. This supercomputer has transformed the stewardship of our nation's nuclear stockpile, including predicting the aging effects of nuclear weapons. The computer can perform 1.742 quintillion calculations per second.

Kyle Randall Knipper at the Department of Agriculture developed satellite-based models for transforming traditional irrigation practices, providing growers with detailed, near real-time information about how much water their crops use and enabling better irrigation scheduling and crop health. This

new technology can save almond growers 120,000 Olympic-sized swimming pools' worth of water and has already reduced water use by up to 25 percent at some vineyards.

Michaelangelo León at the U.S. Space Force built a next-generation satellite that will enable the U.S. armed forces to better predict meteorological changes that affect military missions around the world. Since the launch, the satellite has been providing Navy and Air Force weather centers, and the Joint Typhoon Warning Center, with mission-critical data, such as ocean surface vector winds, land soil moisture, and measurements of sea ice and snow depth. This data has also enabled the Defense Department to better track severe weather events such as Hurricanes Debby, Beryl, and Milton.

Yakov Pachepsky, Moon S. Kim and the Sensing and AI Modeling for Environmental Microbial and Food Safety Team at the Department of Agriculture created cutting-edge technology to detect contaminants on farms and at food processing facilities to prevent foodborne illnesses that sicken millions of people in the U.S. every year. Pachepsky has employed drones and other technology to monitor farm irrigation ponds for evidence of potential pathogens

continued on next page



David Lebryk, 2025 Federal Employee of the Year.

while Kim worked with industry to develop and commercialize a hand-held scanner that detects pathogens on food, utensils and other surfaces at processing and other facilities.

Named in honor of Partnership for Public Service founder Samuel J. Heyman, the Service to America Medals program has recognized nearly 800 outstanding civil servants since 2001, highlighting the extraordinary accomplishments of our government and the vital role that civil servants play in our daily lives. For profiles of current and past honorees, visit servicetoamericamedals.org.

The 2025 honorees and their dedicated colleagues are the backbone of our democracy, ensuring that the federal government, our most important tool for collective action in a complex world, meets



Former Chiefs of Staff Denis McDonough and Jeff Zients offered praise for the medal winners.



Janet Yellen and Timothy Geithner, former U.S. Secretaries of the Treasury, present the Federal Employee of the Year Award.

its mission to serve the public interest. The Partnership's research shows that the American public's low trust in government stems from a lack of understanding about the important role played by the career civil service, who these people are and what they do for them, making the recognition of their work all that more important.

The emcee of the 2025 Sammies awards ceremony was broadcast journalist Judy Woodruff. Presenters included former White House Chiefs of Staff Jeff Zients, Denis McDonough and Josh Bolten as well as former Treasury Secretaries Tim Geithner

and Janet Yellen. The program included video presentations highlighting the important work of the honorees.

The 2025 Service to America Medals program was made possible by the generous support of Tom and Andi Bernstein, Bloomberg Philanthropies, Microsoft, and Patricia A. and George W. Wellde Jr.

During the past 24 years, the Partnership for Public Service has been dedicated to building a better government and a stronger democracy. For more information, visit ourpublicservice.org. ●



Sean O'Keefe, former Secretary of the Navy and former Administrator of NASA, presents an award alongside Jerry Ma, a 2024 medal winner.

“What’s at stake is ... that we have a government that keeps us safe and continues to modernize, not regress, in order to meet the important needs of the American people.”

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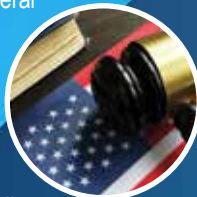


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TRUST BUILDING AND TRUST BUSTING: A DELICATE LEADERSHIP ART

By Joe Schumacher

Leaders are weighed and measured, sized up and judged more on results than words alone. Core values and actions override words, as deeds tell the team whether they're

valued, trusted, and respected. Good people forget a phony manager the nanosecond that boss transfers out, but all remember an inspirational and genuine servant leader. Leadership credibility is quickly generated when there's alignment between say and do, words and actions, promises and delivery.

Thus, failing to deliver on commitments and promises strikes an ominous death knell for the disingenuous boss

Shaping the work unit, getting it in motion, instilling a sense of urgency, handling pressure and the attendant biting criticism, and making informed decisions quickly

generates leadership standing. Done once, you will be in demand to replicate this success because you've applied the seemingly elusive recipe (fixing bad performers, knocking out job interference, applying a massive dose of common sense, making tough choices, treating all with respect, etc.). By succeeding where most typically melt, the confidence of others in your leadership will go stratospheric.

Building trust and corresponding high morale is a combination of valuing, respecting, developing, and promoting worthy team members.

Meaningful workplace change can't happen until unilateral trust is established – that is, leadership first earns the trust of team members; otherwise, changes are more of a dictatorial forced feeding. And, without trust there is no one to lead. Trust is fundamental to workplace welfare, morale, and safety. Intentionally establish trust and the team is then ready for high-impact leadership. Here are specific recommendations leading to trust building, earning the lasting respect and perhaps even the affection of team members. While not stacked ranked, the first few represent the most common reason good people abysmally fail in a leadership role.

Trust is antecedent to all other leadership influence

Forget likability: Strive for leadership respect above popularity or risk being perceived as an insincere glad handler. Typically, one-third of the team members will like you, one-third won't, and one-third won't care as long as their paycheck arrives on time. Great leaders rise above the "1/3 rule."

Make tough choices: Inability to pull the trigger on the tough choices of leadership or to execute in critical areas is an intractable

deficiency. Make informed decisions without apology, guilt, hubris, and often without perfect information.

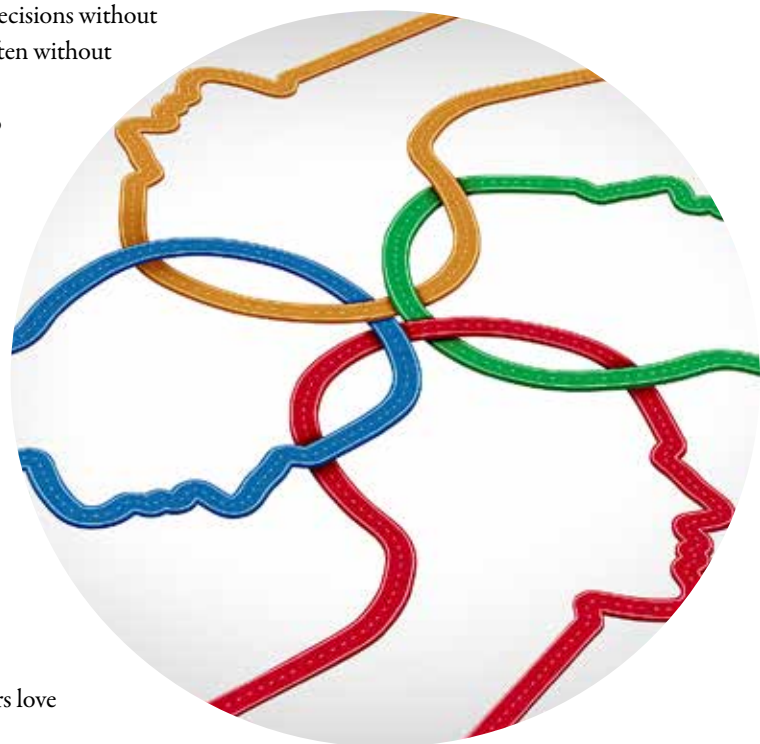
Keep your word and keep your credibility: Ensure no gaps exist between your words and deeds; follow up and call back; guard against overpromising by surveying the landscape and conducting due diligence before committing. Then, make your word a binding contract.

Declare war on silliness: Seek and destroy weighty bureaucracy and workplace interference. Help make the difficult...easy. Team members love this.

Be the example to emulate: Show constancy of ethics, principles, and conduct; be a role model for the behavior you desire from others. Start out as an exemplary teacher, leader, counselor, and mentor but deal with those who "don't get it."

Instill a sense of urgency: Get the work unit in motion; establish a nimble, fast-paced, on-your-toes momentum where sensible speed of execution is the minimum acceptable performance expectation. Don't compromise quality for speed but raze glacial processes and discourage bureaucratic mindsets.

Level the playing field: Ensure across-the-board enforcement of workplace rules and performance expectations. Tolerate no exemption, grant no special privilege, accept no entitlement. Turn away bootlickers, apple polishers, boss butterers,¹ dittoheads, oily schemers and unabashed leg-humpers. Wide-spread trust and equal influence among team members builds morale and facilitates open and honest communication. Bake



justice, integrity, and accountability into the workplace culture. Relate rewards to actual performance.

Never complain down: Team members seek a leader bigger than the problems they face. Complain upstream only if critical but never down.

Teach and develop others everyday: Great leaders are great teachers because they sincerely enjoy helping others learn, understand, and grow professionally. Be a master of the anecdotal examples so all remember the story and the concept.

Preemptively address team spirit: Host a celebration gathering to commemorate a quick success, share big news and publicly recognize team achievement.² Subtly help your team deliver on or ahead of schedule and on or under budget, and then watch morale go up and desirable work unit "eliteness" coalesce. Publicly celebrate more team successes than individual achievements.

¹ "The Slippery Art of Boss Buttering" is about disingenuous flattery which is the antithesis of being treated with dignity and respect. Have zero tolerance for any of this.

² Here's the irony: the simplest, least costly and most appreciated way to acknowledge great performance is seemingly the most arduous for bosses. A handwritten "nice job" card takes 60 seconds to write and costs about twenty-five cents; the deluxe version has an embossed gold "Seal of Excellence" at thirty-five cents and the hand delivered version is priceless. If you think your folks won't appreciate your thoughtfulness, just watch how fast cards appear like collector edition baseball cards on cubicles or office walls. Folk's respect and appreciate your effort to acknowledge their special effort.

continued on next page

Be around and be visible: Be active without hubbub and get out from behind the desk and away from the office. Burn some shoe leather and keep a laser focus on the priceless persons behind their desks. Beware of the insidious and creeping contagion of Bunker Mentality as it's the first step to estrangement, then self-isolation, and ultimately checking out.

Shake up the stodgy old guard: communicate written performance expectations immediately so folks can buy in or opt out; ensure all know that collegiality, teamwork, executing on deliverables, and deadlines count. Results matter more than face time, title, and tenure.

Build-in accountability: On Day #1, let each person know all are accountable, what is expected and your metrics of success – milestones, midpoints, etc. Swift action sends a lightning bolt message – no exceptions. Expect pushback from blockheads; retool where necessary.

Accept, as a badge of honor all blame for the bad stuff that happens on your watch. Akin to a lightning rod, absorb the hit and

.....

Give folks the sense you are bigger than the everyday problems you face. And handle unusual events with steady nerves and aplomb.

.....

never, ever blame others or fail to show watertight confidence in your team. Then, after the smoke lifts, seek root cause and “lessons learned” as part of the continuous improvement culture.³

Take no credit for the good stuff that happens on your watch. Never take personal credit for individual or team achievements. When accolades flow from above, earnestly respond with “the team made that happen” or “I’m surrounded by brilliant people.” Ensure upstream accolades readily flow to the team.

Make hometown heroes by developing “go to” people. Every team member enjoys being viewed as a unique someone with a special skill set and singular competency. Harness the collective genius within the workplace through subject matter experts.

Be rattle proof especially during a crisis. Great leaders are smart about controlling their emotions and the caliber of a true professional is undaunted coolness under duress. Give folks the sense you are bigger than the everyday problems you face. And handle unusual events with steady nerves and aplomb.

3 Successful leaders are not quirky people, they're just good folks with a knack for taming evil forces and getting the work world in order by simplifying everything. Thus, they adopt CI's best practices to push out shopworn, conventional, and conveniently arbitrary limits.

Ways To Show Trust and Earn Respect

.....

- *Lead by ethical example*
- *Keep your word*
- *Trust 'em with greater responsibility and autonomy*
- *Be the contagious and courageous example*
- *Coach and council deadwood or take stronger action*
- *Serve and protect*
- *Flatten the organization and force down decision-making*
- *Get written performance expectations in place*
- *Be around, approachable, and available*
- *Celebrate success even if small*
- *Use flexible controls*
- *Share important information*
- *Offer a guiding hand as gentle coach understanding mentor*
- *Delegate to develop*
- *Judiciously offer advice*
- *Make everyone a Subject Matter Expert then treat all like they are*
- *Ask all to help resolve issues*
- *Ask meaningful questions about their job*
- *Catch all doing things right*
- *Give all uninterrupted time and your undivided attention*
- *Offer all advanced training*
- *Sponsor advancement – even if team members are promoted out of your work group*

Move deliberately slowly. Research critical issues and then display a massive dose of common sense. Do your homework, solicit input, and ask others about the lay of the land and then make informed decisions. Let folks catch their breath and adjust to you, too.

Celebrate success loudly and often. Visibly demonstrate your respect for the team, their talents, and contributions. Acknowledge especially the quiet excellence of the heads down folks who work in the back office.

Find operational efficiencies. Empire building and featherbedding are fast credibility busters; focus on improving operations. Instill a culture of continuous improvement of self, others, and process.

Run the place as you know best, not how you think others would lead or how the last manager operated. Trust “the force,” your gut, and the team.

Steer clear of disputes others should be resolving. Provide the training so all settle disputes unless a command decision is necessary; expect “job maturity” and civility from all.

Think and speak one level up. Talk on the level of your boss and never be intimidated by the boss; provide a candid response when asked “how are things going?” separate nice to know info from must know info and send it upstream to keep the boss apprised of important “stuff.” Truth to power must be part of the culture.

Team members always conduct a critical judgment and size up of the character and talent of a leader before surrendering their trust. They act on their assessment of the leader’s trustworthiness. Remember, it’s what you do that builds trust – not fancy declarations, eloquent speeches, and transparent charisma.

Finally, a high performing team deserves special treatment and protections, so don’t disable and demoralize by enforcing the archaic and backward “the customer is always right” decree. Don’t knee-jerk an executive override



or automatically render a reversal when a customer complains. Get the facts and when warranted, stalwartly back up your team members, especially when they push back on out-of-scope requests or on wildly unrealistic customer expectations. The team will be impressed by your tungsten steel backbone and the heady support, while morale and your leadership reputation will increase exponentially. As a leader, serve and protect your team members. They should never be treated as guilty until proven innocent. Here are related but hopefully, not earth-shattering revelations:

- The customer can be wrong.
- Never reward bad customer behavior.
- The customer will not respect you if allowed to push you around via heightened

expectations and out of scope demands. Customer expectations continually escalate when leadership fails to show some guts, or hold the line and stay within the agreed to scope of work.

Leadership credibility is quickly generated when there’s alignment between say and do, words and actions, promises and delivery.

Successful leaders detach their emotions when executing on distasteful workplace business. They know that higher respect and an uptick in morale are the payout for addressing unpleasantness and making the tough choices of leadership.

Trust Busting

Team members must have trust in the character, values, vision, goals, competence, and judgment of their leader before forward movement takes place. This section illuminates the path to rapid leadership failure and corresponding workplace collapse through too common, worst practices. The calculus of this catastrophe is paved with credibility killers and here they are:

Fail to Address Bad Performance – This is a critical leadership function. Second only to bad character, nothing flat lines morale nor foredooms leadership faster than failing to swiftly address peripheral performers.

The Big Bang – A boss will strategically plan their ostentatious arrival to impress upon all that a new and more enlightened sheriff is in town and everything is to change – fast. They will then go about ordering changes for

continued on next page

The Paradox of Leadership Failures

- *Saying “yes” too fast*
- *Saying “no” too slow*
- *Blaming all*
- *Praising all*
- *Seeking popularity over respect*
- *Mistaking loudness for credibility*
- *Mistaking bustling, meaningless activity for results*
- *Mistaking apple polishing for admiration*

Note: Never take the easy yes over the tougher no; always decide for the right and good, not the popular or easily accepted.

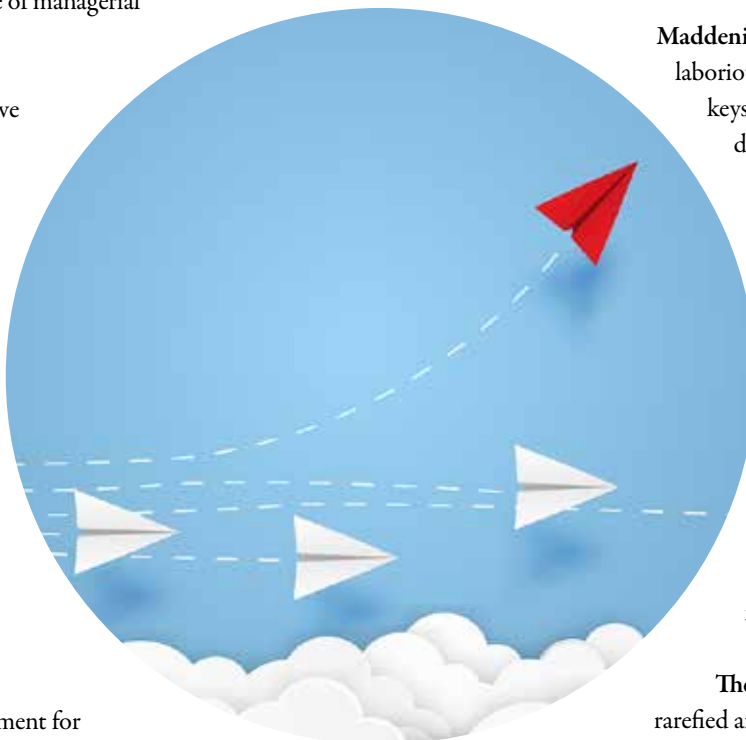
no obvious or explained reason other than “I said so.” This snobbish behavior, diametrically opposite that of the successful leader, is rooted in arrogance. Any public touting of title and authority is showy pageantry. Pronouncements that everything must change is insulting, disdainful, and naive. Team members know that little material change results from the white noise of managerial chatter.

Leadership by Best Seller – Naive managers fall for this charlatan technique as a convenient substitute for actionable leadership. And a “Bromide of the Month” Rx inevitably results in an attempt to bend and fold folks to do more with less. Moreover, from repetition, team members are weary of the phony “Best Seller Management Technique” as they already know the cyclical drill and the smell of this fusty elixir and its attendant gimmicks, buzzwords, traps, and frustrations. Similar to the big bang tactic, team members simply wait with silent lament for the latest fad to fade – along with leadership trust and credibility. The best practices of best sellers have few

take-aways as they lack universal workplace application, so replicating success from elsewhere requires more than borrowing the cookie cutter from Aunt Bernice and thinking you can now bake her award-winning cookies. Don’t allow a marvelous, easy-to-swallow wizard potion to be a substitute for substantive leadership. Team members know better and can’t be fooled with weasel cunning or imitation leadership. They see a best-seller ploy as calculating, self-serving, disingenuous, and temporary.

The M.I.A. Boss – The noticeably absent boss is guaranteed to be a noticeable leadership failure. Truancy and tardiness are consummate behaviors of the bungling boss, and an awful example guaranteed to quickly take down morale. Leadership is about pulsing the motivation chords of others, and a lack of material presence is a bad example as it eviscerates the will of others to work. An experienced leader knows that “being around” in an inconspicuous and unassuming way is critical to maintaining credibility. The leader is accessible, and their office door is habitually open. They forcefully escape the convenient distraction of brush fires and range wars to mingle with the troops, intentionally causing minimum commotion, and to show interest in the jobs, problems, and welfare of others. The effectiveness of the absentee boss is inversely proportional to the frequency of their time away:

$$\text{Boss Effectiveness} = \frac{1}{\text{absence}}$$



Maddening Metrics – Bosses think that their laborious planning, micro-managing, and keystroke measuring of a team member’s daily activity ensures results. Not so, and quite the opposite. The outcome depends more on how passionate the team member is about their work and workplace. Thus, a leader’s superior people skills have a greater impact on improving productivity, growth and continuous improvement than does misguided measurement drilled to a granular level. Impersonal numbers and measuring insult team members.

The Bunker Mentality – and its rarefied air. A desk is the wrong place to practice leadership and the hermetic office with door consistently closed literally ensconces the boss in

Terminal Leadership Mistakes

- *Lose integrity, credibility, and team trust*
- *Tolerate marginal performers*
- *Fail to make the tough choices*
- *Fail to provide tools, training, and trust*
- *Fail to reward exemplary performance*
- *Be aloof*
- *Place self over team*
- *Dictate to a job-mature team*
- *Fail to find motivational triggers*
- *Be secretive and restrict information flow*
- *Change everything upon arrival*
- *Fail to pry up entrenched bureaucrats*
- *Fail to instill a sense of urgency*
- *Be the Invisible Boss (frequently absent or deskbound, and chairborne)*

a sterile cocoon while locking out team members. This self-serving behavior is the antithesis of the servant-leader and shoe-leather burning leader, and breeds and feeds a secrecy culture. A small dose of “protected time” is understandable, but not all day – every day. Keep the door open and welcome sign lit – better yet, get out of the office, into the workplace and light the way. ●

Joe Schumacher is a retired Training Program Director with the Office of Personnel Management's Western Management Development Center where he designed and delivered leadership programs. He is a graduate of the Leadership for a Democratic Society Program at the Federal Executive Institute. Joe is also a former fire chief from the west side of Denver and has ten years' experience as a director with a high-tech company north of Denver that manages much of the nation's 9-1-1 database. Joe is a U.S. Army veteran serving in a support unit for the 101st Airborne Division at Ft. Campbell, Kentucky, and in the 1st Armored Division Nuremburg, Germany. He published over eighty leadership and administrative management manuscripts and has delivered hundreds of leadership workshops. He can be reached at: jayarvadaco@gmail.com.

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ACTION LETTER AUGUST AND MORE!

By Carol Green

FMA members found time in their busy schedules this summer to advocate for issues important to the federal worker community and to grow our ranks. Specifically, they participated in our Action Letter August Campaign and Summer Membership Recruitment Drive. Here's a wrap-up of these initiatives, and ideas for you to participate throughout the year.

Plus, do you make New Year's Resolutions? See the sidebar for ideas on how FMA can help you meet your goals for 2026 while also helping FMA meet some of ours.

Inaugural Action Letter August Campaign a Success!

Last summer, we rolled out our inaugural Action Letter August Campaign, an FMA grassroots initiative where we asked every FMA member to send each of our seven action letters to their elected leaders, and then invite their colleagues, family, and friends to do the same.

Our goal for this campaign was 500 letters which we smashed by sending 800+ letters in the month August!

This was an exciting initiative because participation was so widespread. FMA chapter members, FMA members at large, and their allies (friends and family) from Maine to Hawaii, from Florida to Washington, and many places in between, heeded our call to action and made their elected leaders aware of the issues that affect them and the federal worker community through sending FMA action letters. This campaign, 56 members and 13 allies, sent 805 letters. Imagine how many letters we will send in future campaigns when more members jump on the bandwagon! 2,000 letters? 3,000 letters?

FMA President Craig Carter said, "I am encouraged by the participation of our members in this inaugural campaign. As the word spreads, we hope Action Letter campaigns will evolve into a growing movement within FMA to show our elected leaders we are an engaged constituency. When Greg and I visited the Hill in September, it truly made a difference in our meetings knowing that many members of

Congress had been recently sent letters from FMA members making them aware of the issues affecting the federal worker workforce."

Greg Stanford, FMA's Government and Public Affairs Director, echoed Craig's words, "This is by far the most action letters that have been sent by FMA members

Action Letter August By the Numbers

Letters sent	805
Chapters participating.....	16
Individuals participating	69
Chapter members	56 members sent 662 letters
Members at Large	5 members sent 67 letters
Allies (family, friends, FMA staff).....	8 allies sent 76 letters

over a month since I have worked here. It's encouraging that we had such a great response this summer, and I hope we're able to build on this momentum for future campaigns. Keep sending the FMA action letters, everyone. It's making a difference!"

For fun, we also held a friendly competition between chapters to see which chapter would get bragging rights for the most letters sent.

Congratulations to Chapter 3 – Norfolk Naval Shipyard, Norfolk, Virginia, for ending up on top of the chapter leaderboard with 157 letters sent by 10 members.

Also, Region 2 won "Region Bragging Rights" with 303 letters sent. Runner up was Region 1 with 262 letters sent.

Every FMA member who sent an action letter during the campaign was entered in a random drawing for three \$100 AmEx gift cards, compliments of FMA-PAC. Members could earn up to seven entries for sending each unique action letter.

Congratulations to:

- Peter Bancroft, *Chapter 14 – Puget Sound Naval Shipyard, Bremerton, WA*
- Lavette Fargo, *Chapter 191 – Railroad Retirement Board, Chicago, IL*
- Courtney Skinner, *Chapter 21 – Marine Corps Air Station, Cherry Point, NC*

A hearty thank you to all who participated in the inaugural Action Letter August campaign! We plan to hold similar campaigns in 2026 as we set a goal for over 1,000 letters sent.

In the meantime, we encourage everyone to continue to send action letters to your elected representatives throughout the year, and to ask your family, friends, and colleagues to do the same. It is an easy and impactful practice that all members can adopt, and it really does make a difference to the advocacy work we are doing on Capitol Hill on behalf of you, your fellow federal managers, and the overall federal workforce.

Finally, please consider contributing to FMA-PAC, either with a one-time donation or preferably through a recurring auto payroll deduction. (Retirees may have donations made through their annuity.)



Chapter 3 – Norfolk Naval Shipyard, Norfolk, VA, members Jeris Smith, Nicholas Boyle, Everett "Easy" Ryder, and Sabrina Peet, are all smiles having participated in the Action Letter August Campaign. Chapter 3 sent 157 letters, the most of any chapter.

Summer 2025 Membership Recruitment Drive Recap

FMA welcomed 62 regular and associate new members during our summer recruitment drive which ran from June 2 to July 31. Chapter 3 – Norfolk Naval Shipyard, Norfolk, VA, recruited an impressive 31 members!

Thank you to everyone who recruited one (or more!) member this summer. And a big round of applause to our corporate partner, GPIS Employee Benefits Specialist, who generously provided a \$100 AmEx gift card to each of the 62 members recruited during this campaign.

For each member recruited, the recruiter was entered into a drawing with three winners selected at random. GPIS also provided these gift cards.

Congratulations to:

Grand Prize Winner (\$500 AmEx Gift Card)

- Varney Range, *Chapter 19, Pearl Harbor Area, Honolulu, HI*

Second Prize Winners (\$250 AmEx gift cards)

- Pamela Bell, *Chapter 3, Norfolk Naval Shipyard, Norfolk, VA*
- Tisa Wilson, *Chapter 11, Fleet Readiness Center – Southeast, Jacksonville, FL*

You, too, can contribute to growing FMA membership and earn entries into future drawings during future membership recruitment drives – keep an eye out for an announcement in the coming months. And in the meantime, be sure to talk up the benefits of FMA membership with your federal manager colleagues because a growing FMA membership helps make us a more vibrant and powerful organization.

It has been great to see so many new members taking part in FMA's efforts, along with our long faithful members. Thank you for being part of Team FMA and making a difference. ●

Carol Green is FMA's Finance & Membership Coordinator and was instrumental to the success of the 2025 convention.

DEFENSE LOGISTICS AGENCY CHAPTER CELEBRATES WITH A FALL FLING!

Chapter 208, Defense Logistics Agency – Philadelphia, hosted their festive Fall Fling on October 9, 2025. Held in the Officers' Club on base, Chapter President John Charalabidis and Vice President Yvonne Poplawski ensured it was a wonderful event for all the chapter members, and prospective members, in attendance. Several members of the Charalabidis and Poplawski families helped out, while other chapter members decorated the tables and room, and welcomed folks as they arrived.

The afternoon started with time to mingle and visit over drinks and hors d'oeuvres. It wasn't long before John started the first round of drawings for prizes, most of which were handsome FMA swag, such as hats, shirts, mugs, tumblers, pint glasses and mousepads. Other lucky winners walked away with bottles of wine. In all cases, everyone enjoyed the great variety of prizes. All the while, Georgios Charalabidis served as DJ and added to the entertainment with a broad selection of music.

Everyone then helped themselves to the buffet dinner provided by a favorite local caterer. The choices were generous, with beef tenderloin, shrimp, chicken marsala,



Chapter 208 President John Charalabidis and Vice President Yvonne Poplawski address the gathered attendees.

and vegetarian lasagna all on the menu! In the spirit of Halloween, in addition to the delicious dessert options, each table had some candy for the taking.

FMA Executive Director Todd Wells, and Government & Public Affairs Director Greg Stanford were honored to be invited to take part in the Fall Fling, and to offer a short presentation on the work of FMA. Greg reminded everyone of some of the many successes we have achieved in recent years, and provided an update on progress made toward ending the government shutdown. He also talked about the many Congressional meetings that he and National President Craig Carter had had the week before. It was a wonderful opportunity for Todd and Greg to meet Chapter 208 members in their hometown and learn more about the amazing, vital, and difficult work done by the Defense Logistics Agency. They left the dinner hoping to visit many other chapters in the coming year.

As the event drew to a close, John drew a few more names, with more winners taking home prizes. Thanks to the work of John, Yvonne, and so many Chapter 208 members, everyone left the Fall Fling as a winner! ●

MEMBERS IN ACTION



Chapter 208 members enjoy fellowship and a good meal.



Some of the FMA swag to be won by lucky chapter members!

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MEMBERS IN ACTION

A person wearing a purple t-shirt is holding a large megaphone over their face, as if they are shouting or making an announcement. The megaphone is white with a black rim and a black handle. The background is a solid light blue.

FMA ANNOUNCEMENTS

It has been another busy year for the Federal Managers Association and our members. Between the new administration and Congress starting in January, through the DRPS and RIFs, and into the government shutdown, there has been no shortage of changes to the federal government, and challenges for every federal worker. It will be good to see you at FMA's upcoming convention where we can share our perspectives and insights with each other with an eye toward finding new allies on Capitol Hill and beyond. Please read through the following announcements and reach out to us if you have any questions or suggestions. Also, you can always visit www.fedmanagers.org for the latest information about FMA. We always enjoy hearing from our members!

Attend FMA's National Convention

FMA's 88th National Convention and Management Training Seminar will be held March 22 - 25, 2026, in Alexandria, Virginia. The Hilton Alexandria Old Town Hotel is close to FMA's National Office, and just a block from the King Street Metro Station. Old Town Alexandria offers restaurants and entertainment of all kinds with a free shuttle that runs from the hotel to the riverfront!

You are invited to help us plan FMA's work in 2026 and beyond. The convention is a great way to get to know your fellow FMA members working across the federal government. As usual, we will have an outstanding day of training and will visit our legislators on Capitol Hill to educate them on issues that matter most to you and affect your career.

Plan now to attend. And think about bringing family and friends and turning it into a memorable vacation. FMA conventions are always a great experience for those in attendance. You'll find the most current information on the FMA website at: www.fedmanagers.org/events. We look forward to seeing you there!

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 Nominations Committee Chair Pat Niehaus at fmapatricia@hotmail.com, and Executive Director Todd Wells at twells@fedmanagers.org to express your interest or for more information.

FMA Award Nominations

Do you know an outstanding federal manager who deserves to be recognized for his/her 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. Region Directors' contact information may be found at: 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.



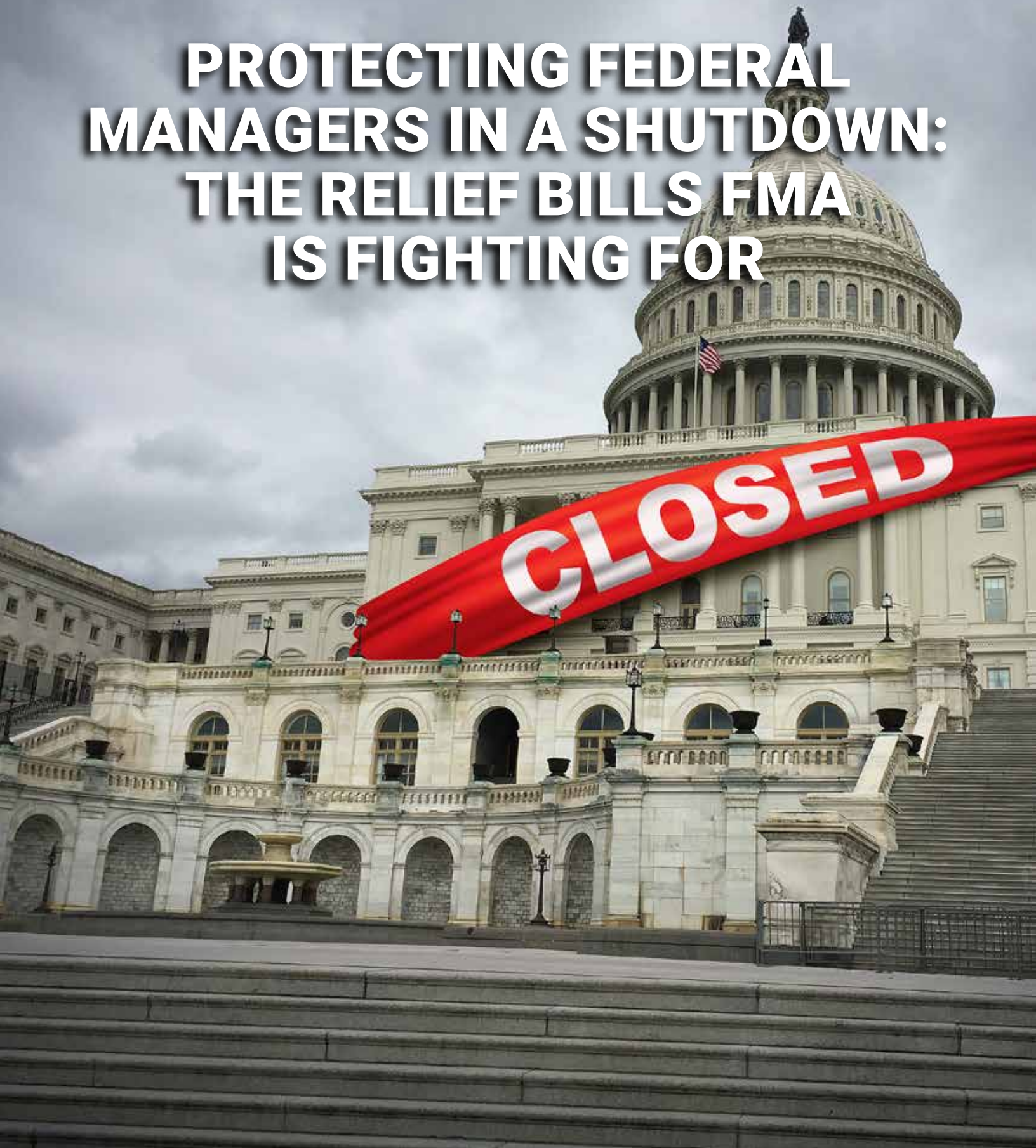
Write an Article for *The Federal Manager*

We love to hear from our members! And FMA members love to hear what their fellow members and chapters are up to! Please share pictures and a short (or not short) article and we'll publish your work in a future issue of *The Federal Manager* magazine. Send us pictures of your chapter's holiday party, lunch, dinner, happy hour, or any other event you held. It's not only fun to see what our colleagues are up to across the country, but it may inspire another member or chapter to do something they have not tried before. We know that many of our chapters form a team for 5K runs/walks, or volunteer for a local "clean up" day. Nothing is too big or small; we just want to hear about the good stuff you and your chapter are up to. Send pictures and articles to Todd Wells at twells@fedmanagers.org.

FMA Swag Available for Purchase

We offer some great-looking FMA-branded products to help chapter members show their FMA pride. Check out our current offerings at www.fedmanagers.org/Products. ●

PROTECTING FEDERAL MANAGERS IN A SHUTDOWN: THE RELIEF BILLS FMA IS FIGHTING FOR



By Greg Stanford

The fall of 2025 saw the longest lapse in appropriations and resulting government shutdown in United States history. That dubious distinction led to unrecoverable losses to the economy of more than \$7 billion, according to the Congressional Budget Office. It led to delays, cancellations, and disruptions in air travel. Just as important, it created undue stress on federal managers who were furloughed or worked without pay.

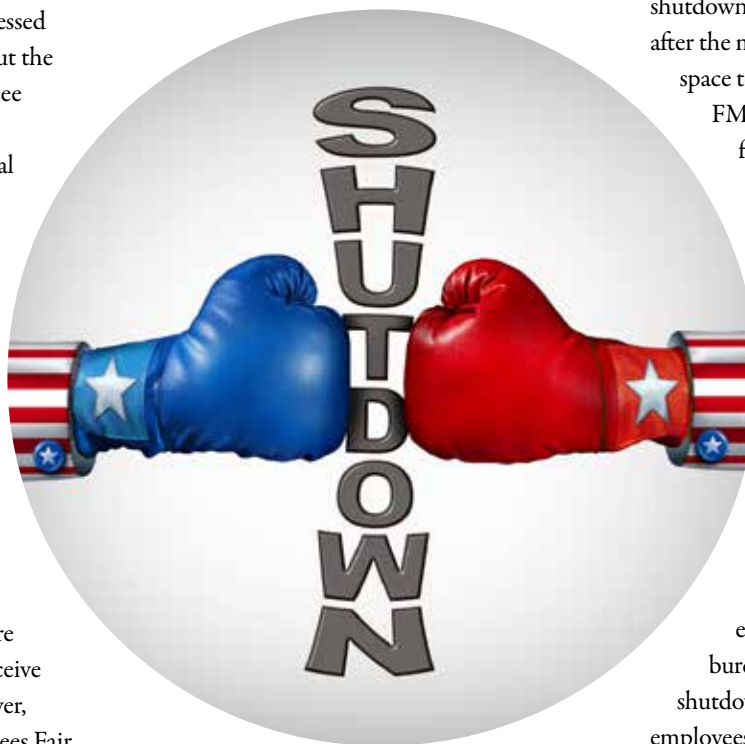
I heard heartbreaking stories from many FMA members who were stressed and emotionally drained throughout the shutdown. It was disheartening to see hard-working federal employees in line for food banks and other critical services due to such a completely avoidable and irrational emergency. Federal managers expressed concerns about missing mortgage payments, how to pay for childcare, and taking drastic measures to care for their families. Some were at risk of losing their security clearances at no fault of their own.

In the back of their minds, federal employees had some measure of comfort knowing they would receive back pay once the shutdown was over, thanks to the Government Employees Fair Treatment Act, the 2019 law that guarantees all feds are provided back pay following a government shutdown. However, even that was in doubt as the administration suggested it was considering picking and choosing who would actually receive back pay. FMA's stance was, and remains, that the 2019 law, signed by President Trump, applies to all feds, excepted and furloughed, for any shutdown.

FMA supported the legislation that ended the shutdown. It provided full Fiscal Year 2026 funding for Agriculture, MilCon-VA, and the legislative branch, and temporary funding through January 30, 2026, for all

other agencies. We at FMA celebrated the end of the shutdown and urged Congress to swiftly fund the remaining agencies for the rest of the fiscal year. And we are optimistic legislators will not cause another shutdown, especially so quickly after the disastrous fall.

Having said that, we also know we cannot expect Congress and the administration to prevent another lapse in funding. Every year we remind Congress that federal managers want to be at their posts fulfilling their congressionally mandated missions and providing important services to every



citizen in the United States. However, nearly every year managers must waste time and resources preparing for a potential – or actual -- shutdown. We frequently remind legislators that delaying appropriations and flirting with government shutdowns results in egregious costs and waste, even when a shutdown is ultimately averted. It takes significant time and resources for agencies to prepare for a potential shutdown. Private sector business would never manage a budget this way.

FMA National President Craig Carter said, "As a country, we need to quickly find a solution to this recurring problem of a potential government shutdown each year ... It is critical that members of Congress work together in a bipartisan manner to fund the U.S. Government and prevent a shutdown."

The unfortunate reality is, at this time, the threat of government shutdowns remains a constant threat. Federal managers have been used as pawns in a political game of chicken, and get caught in the crossfire of political funding debates.

Several members of Congress introduced shutdown-related bills before, during and after the most recent shutdown. I will use this space to inform you of some of the bills FMA has endorsed that would support federal managers and provide even more relief to you and your families during any future government shutdown.

The Shutdown Fairness Act

FMA endorsed the Shutdown Fairness Act (S. 3168), legislation introduced by Sen. Ron Johnson (R-WI), that would prevent all federal employees from bearing the financial burden of any future government shutdown. Under this bill, federal employees would no longer be furloughed, would perform their duties to the maximum extent possible during a lapse in funding, and would be paid on their normal schedule throughout the duration of the lapse. The bill received bipartisan support during the shutdown, with improvements and safeguards included based on negotiations with Senators Gary Peters (D-MI), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), and others.

The measure would appropriate funds to be solely used to pay salaries and wages to feds during any lapse in funding to agencies.

continued on next page

It would apply to covered federal employees hired and onboarded prior to a shutdown, and every dollar appropriated would be required to go to employee paychecks. The bill would apply to any future lapse in funding, ensuring feds would no longer be forced to work without pay, or sent home, due to the inability of Congress and the Administration to fund agencies.

Other Shutdown Relief Measures FMA Supports

While the Shutdown Fairness Act would resolve the financial concerns of feds during a lapse in funding, FMA has also endorsed other relief measures in the event S. 3168 does not pass.

- The Federal Employees Civil Relief Act (H.R. 5708 / S. 2982)

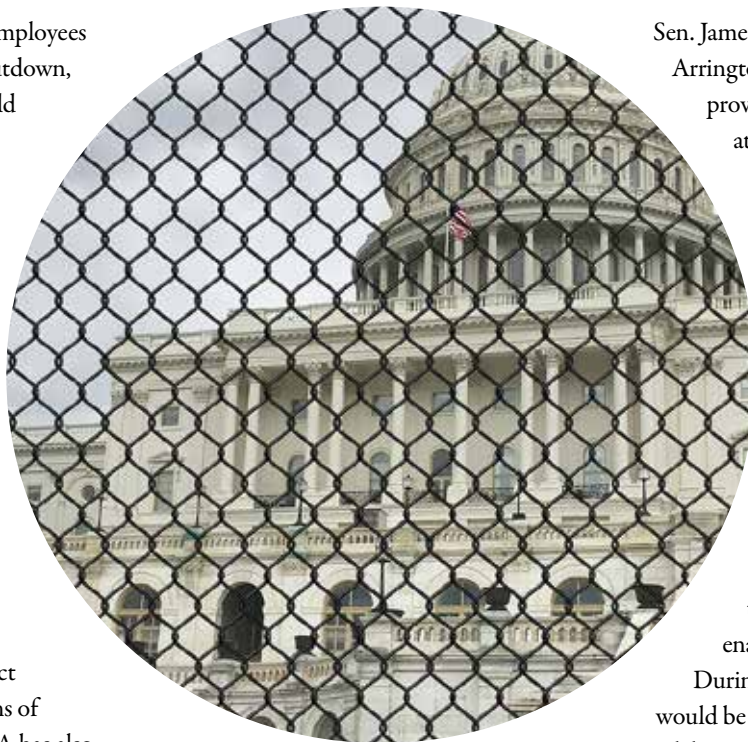
- Would allow federal employees to apply for a temporary stay in court during a shutdown to postpone debts like rent, mortgage, tax, fine, penalty, insurance premium, student loan repayment or other civil obligation or liability. The bill would also delay proceedings like eviction, foreclosure, tax liens, student loan debt, negative credit reporting, and other financial obligations.

- Sponsored by Sen. Brian Schatz (D-HI) and Rep. Brendan Boyle (D-PA)

- The Emergency Relief for Federal Workers Act of 2025 (H.R. 5674 / S. 2966)

- Would remove penalties for federal employees who wish to make hardship withdrawals from their Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) accounts to pay bills during a protracted government shutdown. The bill would also allow workers withdrawing such funds to restore them to their retirement accounts later.

- Sponsored by Sen. Tim Kaine (D-VA) and Rep. Don Beyer (D-VA)



- The Help Federal Employees During Shutdowns (Help FEDS) Act (H.R. 5572 / S.2948)

- Ensures federal employees who are required to work during a government shutdown are eligible to apply for unemployment compensation. Feds would have to pay that amount back at the end of the shutdown.

- Sponsored by Rep. Sarah Elfreth (D-MD) and Sen. Angela Alsobrooks (D-MD)

- The Pay our Public Shipyard Workers Act (H.R. 5680)

- Would ensure that the civilian and military workforce at America's public shipyards continues to be paid during government shutdowns.

- Sponsored by Rep. Maggie Goodlander (D-NH)

The Prevent Government Shutdowns Act

Finally, FMA supports legislation that would avert shutdowns altogether. The Prevent Government Shutdowns Act of 2025 (S. 2721 / H.R. 5130), sponsored by

Sen. James Lankford (R-OK) and Rep. Jodey Arrington (R-TX), respectively, would provide continuing appropriations at existing levels to prevent a government shutdown if the appropriations bills for a fiscal year have not been enacted before the fiscal year begins and continuing appropriations are not in effect.

Upon a lapse in government funding, the Prevent Government Shutdowns Act would implement an automatic continuing resolution (CR), on rolling 14-day periods, based on the most current spending levels enacted in the previous fiscal year.

During this time, particular restrictions would be instituted to ensure legislators work solely to restore funding, including:

- No taxpayer-funded travel allowances for official business (except one flight to return to Washington, DC) for the following:

- White House OMB staff and leadership
- Members of the House and Senate
- Committee and personal staff of the House and Senate

- No official funds may be used for CODEL or STAFFDEL travel

- No use of campaign funds by congressional offices to supplement official duties or travel expenses

- No motions to recess or adjourn in the House/Senate for a period of more than 23 hours

Additionally, no other votes would be in order in the House and Senate unless they pertain to passage of the appropriations bills or mandatory quorum calls in the Senate. After 30 days, legislators could consider a narrow and defined group of bills/programs and nominations for a Justice of the Supreme Court or a Cabinet Secretary.

"Shutting down the government does not fix the debt problem, it just makes it worse," Lankford said upon introduction

continued on page 31

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. 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

During the October 2025 government shutdown, legislators introduced several bills aimed at protecting impacted federal employees. No federal employee should be punished or harmed as a result of the inability of Congress and the Administration to fund the federal government. FMA endorsed the following bills:

- Emergency Relief for Federal Workers Act of 2025 (S. 2966) – This bill would allow federal employees to withdraw funds from their TSP without being penalized if the government shutdown is prolonged, while ensuring that funds could be recontributed later on.
- Pay Our Public Shipyards Act (H.R. 5680) — This bipartisan legislation will ensure the workforce of our nation’s public shipyards is paid during government shutdowns.
- Federal Employee Civil Relief Act (H.R. 5708 / S. 2982) – This bill would protect federal workers, federal contractor employees, and their families, from foreclosures, evictions, and loan defaults during a government shutdown.

In 2019, Congress passed – and President Trump signed — the Government Employee Fair Treatment Act, which guarantees all federal workers receive retroactive pay following any government shutdown. ●

On October 6, Social Security Commissioner Frank Bisignano was named as CEO of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) – in addition to his current role of running the Social Security Administration (SSA). According to a Treasury Department press release, Bisignano will take on the duty of “overseeing all day-to-day IRS operations,” while also leading the SSA.

“Frank is a businessman with an exceptional track record of driving growth and efficiency in the private and now public sector,” said Secretary of the Treasury Scott Bessent in a statement. Bisignano will report to Bessent, who is also serving as acting commissioner of the IRS, assuming that role in August 2025 after Billy Long was removed after approximately two months at the helm. “The IRS and SSA – two of the most public-facing and broadly impactful federal agencies – also share many of the same technological and customer service goals. This makes Mr. Bisignano a natural choice for this role,” reads the statement.

Bisignano was confirmed and sworn in as the 19th Commissioner of the SSA in May of this year. Prior to taking the reins at the Social Security Administration (SSA), Bisignano was Chairman and CEO of Fiserv, a payments and fintech company that processes more than \$2.5 trillion in payments per day. ●

The Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) regained a quorum in early October when the Senate confirmed James Woodruff as a member of the panel. His nomination was included in an en bloc package of confirmations, approved by a 51-47 vote. Woodruff joins Henry Kerner – a fellow Republican – who has been the lone member of the three-person panel since the Trump administration fired Democrat Cathy Harris. MSPB may have no more than two members from the same political party.

Established as part of the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, the MSPB is responsible for adjudicating appeals on federal personnel cases, with a goal of protecting federal employees against prohibited personnel practices such as whistleblower retaliation. With a quorum – at least two members – restored, MSPB can issue final rulings in cases it adjudicates.

Woodruff is a professor at St. Francis School of Law. He earned a B.S. from Texas A&M University and a J.D., from South Texas College of Law. His bio lists experience in civil litigation, Assistant Vice President and Trust Officer of Wells Fargo Bank, and as Assistant Staff Judge Advocate and Reserve Coordinator at Nellis Air Force Base as part of the United States Air Force Reserve.

Woodruff was confirmed for a seven-year term at MSPB, expiring on March 1, 2032. ●

continued from page 28

in September 2025. “The best way to finish negotiating the hard issue is to keep Congress in Washington until the budget is finished. That puts the pressure on lawmakers, not on families and important services.”

Rep. Arrington agrees. “In the real world, if you fail to do your job, there are consequences. Yet, when Congress fails to pass appropriations on time, the burden falls squarely on hardworking Americans – taxpayers, seniors, and our men and women in uniform,” said Arrington, chairman of the House Budget Committee. “My Prevent Government Shutdowns Act is commonsense legislation that would shift the burden of a shutdown away from “We the People” and onto the politicians where it belongs – by forcing members of Congress to stay in Washington until their work on appropriations is complete.”

Lankford and Arrington have introduced similar bills before, but perhaps there is more incentive for Congress to consider the bills on the heels of the most recent shutdown.

Conclusion

Of course, while we support the Prevent Government Shutdowns Act as a safeguard, FMA will always prefer and strongly advocate for Congress to negotiate, work in a bipartisan fashion, and provide agencies the funding and resources they need, on time, without the need of ever invoking the act.

As I wrote in my previous column, we spent much of 2025 playing defense, fighting against proposed cuts to retirement and other benefits, reductions in force (RIFs), and even threats to collect membership dues. And that was before the government shutdown. Knowing the severe impact the shutdown

had on morale for so many of our members, and federal employees across the country, it was important to take a moment to detail the efforts we support to avoid or mitigate the effects of any future shutdown. 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).

Be sure to check this space in the next issue where we will lay out and detail our legislative agenda for 2026, to make a positive difference for managers in the federal workforce.

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. REPRESENTATIVE JEN KIGGANS (R-Virginia)

Jen Kiggans is in her second term serving the 2nd District of Virginia in the House of Representatives. The district includes the cities of Virginia Beach, Chesapeake, Suffolk, and Franklin, along with parts of Accomack, Northampton, Isle of Wight, and Southampton Counties. Kiggans represents many FMA members from Chapter 3 (Norfolk Naval Shipyard).

In addition to having many FMA members as her constituents, Rep. Kiggans plays an important role on FMA issues given her committee assignments on the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) and the Veterans' Affairs Committee. She serves on the Military Personnel, Seapower and Projection Forces, and Cyber, Information Technologies, and Innovation Subcommittees. A veteran herself, Kiggans was a naval aviator for ten years, flying H-46 and H-3 helicopters, with two deployments to the Persian Gulf. She also serves on the Natural Resources Committee.

In the 119th Congress, Rep. Kiggans introduced the Servicemember Healthcare Freedom Act of 2025 (H.R. 3547), which would speed up the effective date of the legislation granting feds in the reserves the ability to enroll in Tricare Reserve Select. FMA worked on the bill that was signed into law, which currently takes effect in 2030. She is an original cosponsor of the Pay Our Public Shipyard Workers Act (H.R. 5680), to ensure that the civilian and military workforce at America's public shipyards continues to be paid during government shutdowns.

Prior to her election to Congress, Kiggans served in the Virginia State Senate, representing the 7th District for three sessions. In addition to her military service, Kiggans has worked as a geriatric nurse practitioner in long-term care facilities in Norfolk and Virginia Beach, and taught English in Japan. She graduated with a Bachelors' Degree from Boston University and nursing degrees from Old Dominion University and Vanderbilt University School of Nursing.

Born in Tampa, Florida, Kiggans worked at Walt Disney World as a teen. She is married and has four children. She and her family live in Virginia Beach. ●

THE FACTS:

Birthplace: Tampa, Florida

Born: June 18, 1971

Education: Boston University, B.A., 1993;
Old Dominion University, B.S.N., 2011;
Vanderbilt University, M.S.N. 2012

Career:

- Representative, 2nd District of Virginia (2023-Present)
- Member, Virginia Senate, 7th District (2020-2022)
- Nurse Practitioner
- University Faculty, Eastern Virginia Medical School
- Naval Aviator (1993-2003)
- Teacher (1993-1994)

Elected: 2024 (2nd term)

Committees:

- House Armed Services
 - Cyber, Information Technologies, and Innovation
 - Military Personnel
 - Seapower and Projection Forces
- House Natural Resources
 - Energy and Mineral Resources
 - Water, Wildlife and Fisheries
- House Veterans' Affairs
 - Health
 - Oversight and Investigations

Contact Information:

U.S. House of Representatives
152 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
Phone: 202.225.4215
Website: <http://kiggans.house.gov>

U.S. REPRESENTATIVE JAMES WALKINSHAW (D-Virginia)



Representative James Walkinshaw was elected to serve residents of the 11th Congressional District of Virginia in September 2025, filling a vacancy created by the May 2025 death of Rep. Gerry Connolly. Walkinshaw is known to the FMA National Office, having served as Rep. Connolly's Chief of Staff for ten years. Walkinshaw represents many federal employees across the Washington, D.C., suburbs of Northern Virginia, and was appointed to the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

Among his first acts after being sworn into office, Rep. Walkinshaw assumed lead sponsorship of several pieces of legislation Rep. Connolly had introduced earlier in the 119th Congress, carrying on his former boss's legacy. Endorsed by FMA, these bills include: the Federal Adjustment of Income Rates (FAIR) Act (H.R. 491), which would provide a 4.3 percent pay raise for feds in 2026; the Equal COLA Act (H.R. 493), to give FERS retirees the same COLA CSRS retirees receive; the Saving the Civil Service Act (H.R. 492), to block the return of Schedule F (now known as Schedule Policy/Career); and, the Family Building FEHB Fairness Act (H.R. 1670), to require FEHB plans to cover IVF.

Walkinshaw has made clear he intends to carve his own legacy, as well. Prior to his election to Congress, Walkinshaw served as a member of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors for nearly five years, chairing the Legislative and Environmental committees. He is also a former vice president of the Ravensworth Farm Civic Association. Walkinshaw's experience on Capitol Hill allowed him to hit the ground running when he was sworn into his seat.

Born in Arlington, Virginia, and raised in Prince William County, Walkinshaw graduated from New York University and managed Connolly's campaign for the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors in 2008.

He and his wife have one child and live in Fairfax County. ●

THE FACTS:

Birthplace: Arlington, Virginia

Born: October 22, 1982

Education: New York University, B.A., 2005

Career:

- Representative, 11th District of Virginia (2025-Present)
- Member, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors (2020-2025)
- Chief of Staff, Rep. Gerry Connolly (2009-2019)

Elected: 2025 (1st term)

Committees:

- House Oversight and Government Reform

Contact Information:

U.S. House of Representatives

2265 Rayburn House Office Building

Washington, DC 20515

Phone: 202.225.1492

Website: <http://walkinshaw.house.gov>



HOW TO WATCH YOUR HEALTH OVER THE HOLIDAY SEASON

The holiday season is a time of joy, celebration, and togetherness – but it can also challenge even the healthiest routines. Between rich foods, busy schedules, and social gatherings, it's easy to lose sight of your well-being. The good news is that with a little mindfulness and balance, you can enjoy the festivities without sacrificing your health. Here's how to stay well through the holidays – body, mind, and spirit.

Eat Mindfully, Not Perfectly

Food is a central part of holiday traditions, and it's perfectly fine to indulge – the key is moderation. Try following the “80/20 rule”: make nutritious choices 80 percent of the time, and allow yourself to enjoy favorite treats guilt-free for the remaining 20 percent. Instead of skipping meals to “save calories” for a big dinner, eat balanced meals throughout the day. This prevents extreme hunger and overeating later. When you do sit down to eat, slow down. Savor each bite, enjoy the company, and listen to your body's hunger and fullness cues.

Be Smart About Alcohol

Holiday cheer often comes with a glass in hand, but it's easy to overdo it. To keep alcohol in check, alternate each alcoholic drink with water or a non-alcoholic option. Eating before you drink also helps slow alcohol absorption. If you want to join the toasts without the buzz, festive mocktails can be a fun, flavorful, and hydrating alternative. You'll enjoy the celebration without the hangover.

Prioritize Restful Sleep

Late-night gatherings, travel, and stress can



easily disrupt your sleep. However, adequate rest – around seven to nine hours per night – is crucial for maintaining energy, mood, and immunity. Try to stick to a loose bedtime routine, even during busy weeks. Small habits, like limiting caffeine in the afternoon and avoiding screens before bed, can help you fall asleep faster and wake up refreshed.

Manage Stress and Social Pressure

While the holidays are meant to be joyful, they can also bring stress, financial strain, or family tension. Be proactive about self-care by scheduling quiet time to recharge. Mindful breathing, meditation, or even a short walk outside can quickly reduce stress levels. Remember, it's okay to say no – setting boundaries protects your mental and emotional well-being.

Keep Moving

You don't need long workouts to stay active during the holidays. Short, consistent

bursts of movement – such as family walks, dancing, or winter activities – can make a big difference. Even a 15-minute workout helps boost energy, reduce stress, and balance out extra calories from holiday treats.

Stay Hydrated and Nurture Your Mind

Dehydration can sneak up in colder months. Keep a refillable water bottle handy and add fruit or herbs for flavor. Just as important, take care of your mental health. Avoid comparing your celebrations to others on social media and focus on what truly matters to you. If you feel overwhelmed or lonely, reach out – connection and support are powerful forms of self-care.

By embracing balance, mindfulness, and kindness toward yourself, you can make the most of the holiday season – feeling healthy, grounded, and genuinely joyful. ●



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 continue to see events that we never thought we would see just a year ago. Radical policy changes, reductions in force (RIF), benefits reductions, and more. Stay informed on what affects you in order to make the smartest decision for your needs.

As I finalize this article on 9 October, the government is still in a shutdown. I have highlighted some information that I hope will be relevant in the near future, and carry to longer term.

The Eliminate Shutdowns Act

Legislation has been introduced to eliminate government shutdowns entirely. The Eliminate Shutdowns Act would establish an automatic continuing resolution process to ensure they do not happen. It was introduced in the House (H.R. 5552) by Congressman Dusty Johnson (R-SD) and in the Senate (S. 2806) by Senator Ron Johnson (R-WI).

Government shutdowns did not exist before 1980, and since being created, they have become used as a political weapon by both parties. In addition to creating a great deal of drama, it also puts federal employees in the middle who have to deal with the



effects of having their jobs and paychecks disrupted by the process.

The stakes are even higher this time for federal employees since the Trump administration has used RIFs to fire thousands of federal employees during this partial government shutdown.

Both political parties are attempting to take full advantage of the shutdown for political leverage. See: <https://www.fedsmith.com/2025/09/26/shutdowns-are-stupid-can-this-bill-finally-end-them>

What Retired Federal Employees Need to Know About Government Shutdowns

Government shutdowns can be disruptive, but the good news is that federal retirees may encounter minimal impacts.

Annuity Payments – Perhaps the most important thing for retirees to know is that their monthly annuity payments will not be

disrupted during a partial shutdown. OPM states that federal retirees under both CSRS and FERS will continue to receive their scheduled monthly annuity payments on the first business day of the month. See: <https://www.fedsmith.com/2025/09/23/what-retired-federal-employees-need-to-know-about-government-shutdowns>

The Government Employee Fair Treatment Act of 2019 guarantees that all federal workers, including those who are furloughed and those who are required to work (essential employees), will receive back pay once the shutdown ends. However, stay tuned as the Act was passed, but no funds were allocated.

Keep your eye on the issues and news. Stay in touch with your elected officials and with FMA. See: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/government-shutdown-contractor-worker-back-pay/>

Federal Retiree Hot Topics 2026

Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA) – The 2026 COLA adjustment impacts Social Security, and federal retirement annuities. The Social Security Administration announces the finalized COLA. See: <https://www.myfederalretirement.com/fers-csrs-cola-watch/>

Medicare Part B Premiums – The Medicare Part B premiums are expected to increase significantly more than the COLA increase. Translation: less money in your pocket.

Healthcare Costs – Managing healthcare expenses will become increasingly important as the cost of healthcare continues to rise.

Federal Budget and Retirement Changes – The 2026 federal budget and potential changes to retirement policies will shape the future of the federal workforce.

These topics will be key considerations as you plan for the new year and beyond.

continued on next page

Retirement Changes 2026

While Congress debated the 2026 federal budget and agencies brace for potential changes, federal employees watch closely. Multiple appropriations and reconciliation bills could lead to significant workforce developments including pay raises, and retirement changes. The future of the federal workforce may be shaped by legislative outcomes in the coming months.

In 2025, the House and Senate introduced a wide range of budget proposals, some of which signaled major shifts in federal compensation, hiring practices and retirement policies. As the political divide continues to influence budget negotiations, every federal worker, whether active or retired, needs to pay close attention. See: *Federal Retirement Changes & Workforce Impact 2026 | Pay, Budget, Shutdown*

2026 COLA

The Social Security Administration (SSA) has just released its official cost of living adjustment (COLA) for 2026 – 2.8 percent. However, expenses and Medicare premiums will likely increase at a higher percentage. Be sure to write your Congressional representatives to express your concerns and needs. They need to hear your voice.

4 Tips for Dealing with Financial Stress During Uncertain Times

1. Have an emergency fund.
 2. Don't dwell on your TSP right now.
 3. Cut unnecessary expenses.
 4. Create or revise your financial plan.
- Chris Kowalik, with MyFederal



Retirement, expands on these tips at the following link: <https://www.myfederalretirement.com/financial-stress/>

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 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, or call 866.201.7829. Visit: 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. 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. ●

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



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