

*Advocating Excellence in Public Service*

1. Congress should provide agencies and departments the resources they need and pass all appropriations bills in a timely manner.
2. Congress should never use federal employees as pawns in a government shutdown political fight and should eliminate government shutdowns altogether.
3. Congress should protect federal employees' compensation, and health and retirement benefits.
4. Congress should protect and preserve due process for all federal employees and prevent the politicization of the civil service.
5. Congress should promote accountability consistent with merit system procedures, and provide managers with tools to deal with poor performers.
6. Congress should pass legislation to establish and fund initial and ongoing mandatory training for all managers and supervisors across the federal government, and provide for a dual-track system to allow technical experts to rise without taking on management roles.
7. Congress should allow Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) employees to make deposits for non-deduction federal service performed, in the same manner as Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) employees and former military personnel.
8. Congress should pass legislation to make cost-of-living-adjustments (COLAs) more accurate and fair, and eliminate the COLA disincentive to early retirement.
9. Congress should authorize capital investments across the federal government to restore and/or modernize facilities to meet their operational needs.
10. Congress should pass meaningful hiring reforms for the federal workforce, including expanding direct hire authority.
11. Congress should pass legislation to enhance training, support, accountability, and reporting with respect to remote work and telework.

## 1. PROVIDE AGENCY FUNDING REFLECTIVE OF MISSION IN A TIMELY FASHION

*Congress should provide adequate funding in a timely manner to allow agencies to procure the resources and staffing levels necessary to execute their missions.*

- **Continuing resolutions (CRs) and government shutdowns cost all American taxpayers and hamstring managers.**
- **FMA implores Congress to stop using the appropriations process and government shutdowns as political tools, and fund the government in a timely, steady fashion.**

It has regrettably become commonplace and expected for Congress to flirt with government shutdowns and force the government to operate under CRs for much of each fiscal year. If Congress is sincere in its commitment to provide American taxpayers with federal services in an efficient and cost-effective manner, lawmakers must navigate the annual appropriations process in a timely fashion. Federal agencies are unable to provide managers and supervisors the resources necessary to achieve their missions when Congress delays passage of comprehensive spending bills.

Enormous stress is placed on federal programs when continuing resolutions, instead of traditional appropriations measures, are used to fund operations. Agencies are prevented from obtaining the necessary resources required to handle rising workloads. Budget uncertainty forces managers and supervisors to focus more on short-term operations and less on their core missions, impeding efficiency and ultimately costing the government and American taxpayers significantly more money in the long run. It results in egregious costs and waste, and it takes significant time and resources for agencies to prepare for and recover from a shutdown.

The impact is debilitating before, during, and after a lapse in funding. And CRs are not much better. A CR keeps funding for all programs at last year's levels, without the ability to plan ahead, meaning that large amounts of money cannot be used for bulk purchasing or other productive ways of using funds. When reflecting on funds lost by the Navy due to CRs from 2011 to 2017, then-Navy Secretary Richard Spencer said, "we have put \$4 billion in a trash can, poured lighter fluid on it, and burned it."

Shutting down the government is never a good option, puts our nation's security at risk, and negatively impacts federal employees and their communities.

## **2. RELIEF FOR FEDS IN THE EVENT OF A GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN**

***Congress should never use federal employees as pawns in a government shutdown political fight and should eliminate government shutdowns altogether.***

- **FMA supports the Shutdown Fairness Act (S. 3168 / H.R. 7137) to pay federal employees on their normal schedule throughout the duration of a government shutdown.**
- **FMA supports legislation to provide financial relief to feds in the event of a future lapse in spending.**
- **FMA supports the Prevent Government Shutdowns Act (S. 2721 / H.R. 5130) to avert all government shutdowns in the future.**

On the heels of the record 45-day government shutdown in October-November 2025, an 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 can get caught in the crossfire of political funding debates. Several shutdown-related bills have been introduced in the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress to give federal employees some basic protections in the event of a future lapse in funding. FMA has endorsed the following measures and urges Congress to support and pass them to provide a measure of relief to federal managers and their families:

### **The Shutdown Fairness Act (S. 3168 / H.R. 7137)**

Under this legislation, introduced by Sen. Ron Johnson (R-WI), 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 bipartisan negotiations with Senators Gary Peters (D-MI), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), and others. Rep. Dusty Johnson (R-SD) introduced companion legislation in the House in January 2026.

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

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)**

This legislation, sponsored by Sen. Brian Schatz (D-HI) and Rep. Brendan Boyle (D-PA), would allow federal employees to apply for a temporary stay in court during a shutdown to postpone debts like rent and mortgage payments, taxes, fines, penalties, insurance premiums, student loan repayments, or other civil obligations or liabilities. The bill would also delay proceedings like evictions, foreclosures, tax liens, student loan debt penalties, negative credit reporting, and other financial obligations.

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

This bill, sponsored by Sen. Tim Kaine (D-VA) and Rep. Don Beyer (D-VA), 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.

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

This bill, sponsored by Rep. Sarah Elfreth (D-MD) and Sen. Angela Alsobrooks (D-MD), ensures federal employees who are required to work during a government shutdown are eligible to apply for unemployment insurance. Feds would have to pay that amount back at the end of the shutdown and upon being paid.

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

This bill, sponsored by Rep. Maggie Goodlander (D-NH), would ensure that the civilian and military workforce at America's public shipyards continues to be paid during government shutdowns.

**The Prevent Government Shutdowns Act (S. 2721 / H.R. 5130)**

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.

### **3. RETURN TO ANNUAL CALCULATION OF CIVIL SERVICE PAY ADJUSTMENTS AND PROTECT BENEFITS**

*To attract and retain the best and brightest to public service, Congress must stabilize the pay and benefits structure of federal employees.*

- **FMA supports the FAIR Act (H.R. 7480 / S. 3823), providing a 4.1 percent raise in 2027.**
- **FMA supports efforts to raise or remove pay caps on the federal workforce.**
- **FMA opposes any arbitrary cuts by Congress to federal pay and benefits that would severely affect feds morale and government's competitiveness with the private sector.**

Federal managers, and indeed all feds, deserve to be treated with respect for their efforts and the work they perform on behalf of the American people. Every job they hold and perform daily is because of a congressional mandate. 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.

**Pay Raise** - Federal pay has not kept pace with inflation, and retention of feds is at severe risk. The Federal Salary Council reported in November 2024 that federal workers earned nearly 25 percent less than their private sector counterparts, a growing disparity that will only force more of the best and brightest out of federal service. FMA urges Congress to provide for a fair and reasonable pay raise that reflects the needs of the workforce for 2027, including strong support for the **Federal Adjustment to Income Rates (FAIR) Act (H.R. 7480 / S. 3823)** which would provide an average 4.1 percent pay raise in 2027.

**Pay Caps** - The federal pay ceiling cap has not kept up with the higher cost of living in many cities across the United States. This issue plays a role in recruitment and retention to the federal workforce, which already has hiring issues. If an employee is offered a promotion at a higher level, with more responsibilities, but no corresponding salary increase, will they take on the new role? Many employees who are now capped are tempted to leave the government for the private sector where there is no pay cap. FMA seeks legislation to address this compounding issue.

**Benefits** - Finally, Congress should not entertain proposals to change retirement benefits for existing employees and retirees. In recent years, Congress targeted the pensions of new hires as a means to rein in spending, increasing employees' contributions without improving upon pension benefits or increasing the government's contribution. More troubling are proposals to change retirement benefits for existing employees and retirees.

These proposals include:

1. An increase for employee payroll contributions toward retirement, with no added benefit
2. Elimination of the Federal Employee Retirement System (FERS) cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA)
3. Reduction of the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) COLA
4. Elimination of the FERS annuity supplement
5. A shift from a "High 3" to a "High 5" for annuity calculations

These proposals would impact all current federal employees – not just new hires – as well as retirees. They amount to nothing more than broken promises to workers who are currently vested, or at or near retirement age, and a tax on federal employees and annuitants. These proposals shift the goalposts and eliminate earned benefits for employees who dedicated a career of service to the country. If enacted, they would cripple recruitment and retention to the federal workforce, at a time when only nine percent of the workforce is made up of employees aged 30 or younger. This number is even more alarming when considering the same age group makes up nearly 23 percent of the private sector workforce. FMA implores Congress to not consider such proposals.

#### **4. PROTECT DUE PROCESS FOR ALL FEDERAL EMPLOYEES**

***To prevent a return to the spoils system, Congress must not eliminate or erode due process for federal employees.***

- Any infringement, limitation, or elimination of due process puts an employee in the unjust position of possibly losing their job without proper cause and creates a strained relationship between labor and management.
- FMA opposes legislation that would eliminate or erode the right to due process.
- FMA supports the Saving the Civil Service Act (H.R. 492 / S. 134) to uphold the merit-based civil service.

A federal employee's right to due process is fundamental and protected by the Constitution, and Congress must not take steps to eliminate or erode this right. In *Cleveland Board of Education v. Loudermill*, the Supreme Court held that the Constitution guarantees that if there must be a cause to remove a public employee from his or her job, then there is automatically a due process requirement to establish that the cause has been met.

Regrettably, the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017 (P.L. 115-41), signed into law in June 2017, has significantly eroded due process and appeals rights for all federal employees in that department. The legislation dramatically reduces an employee's ability to appeal a decision that would deprive that employee of their job and salary. Preventing an employee from understanding charges against them or preparing a meaningful defense undermines an employee's due process and is wrong. At the same time, limiting the number of days to process an action may result in findings of legal insufficiency and no action being taken, rather than taking the necessary time to resolve any documentary issues. Many in Congress are working to extend the same attacks on due process across the federal government. FMA unequivocally opposes legislative efforts to reduce or eliminate due process for federal employees across the government.

Additionally, FMA strongly opposes the return of Schedule F (Schedule Policy/Career), which turns many thousands of feds into at-will employees with limited protections. It increases politicization of the federal workforce and is a giant leap toward a return of the spoils system, prioritizing political loyalty over qualification and merit.

Congress should endeavor to maintain our non-political civil service. The unacceptable elimination of due process for terminating employees leaves feds solely at the whim of politicians – intolerable under any administration, Democratic or Republican. A hallmark of America's civil service is the foundational, fundamental understanding that federal employees swear an oath to the Constitution and provide services to all Americans, regardless of political party. The federal government cannot function effectively without this nonpolitical civil service capable of preserving institutional memory and competence across administrations. FMA supports the Saving the Civil Service Act (H.R. 492 / S. 134), legislation that would uphold a merit-based civil service.

## **5. EMBRACE TARGETED COST SAVING PROPOSALS WITHOUT MISGUIDED MASS LAYOFFS**

*Congress should treat federal employees with dignity and respect, oppose misguided mass layoffs, and embrace targeted cost saving proposals that do not put our country at risk.*

- **FMA supports reasonable and responsible efforts to reduce spending and save American taxpayer dollars.**
- **FMA opposes large-scale, mass layoffs that unfairly punish loyal civil servants and puts our national security at risk.**
- **FMA recommends Congress evaluate and address GAO recommendations in its annual report on fragmentation, overlap, and duplication.**

FMA members – and all federal employees – are taxpayers, too, and we celebrate the elimination of waste in the federal government. However, we have been and remain highly critical of large-scale, widespread reductions in force (RIFs). Many RIFs in 2025 disrupted the delivery of the critical services the American people rely on and hampered agencies from having the resources they need to achieve their missions. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) even cancelled planned RIFs, stating, “IRS has identified areas where staffing reductions created a potential gap in mission critical expertise. As a result, IRS will utilize all available tools – including details, reassessments, DRP/TDRP recissions, external hiring – to identify resources to fulfill the mission-critical skill sets.”

RIFs have profoundly negative effects on essential services, including national security, processing Social Security benefits and IRS tax returns, ensuring food safety, protecting our environment, and much more.

FMA supports excellence, improved performance management, and accountability in the civil service. Large scale RIFs and instilling a culture of fear do not accomplish this. This is an extreme action that does not take into account the vital role federal employees perform daily. The men and women of the federal workforce are its greatest asset and strength. Federal managers are American families, they are American workers, and they are American taxpayers. They, and their families, deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) annually reports on federal programs, agencies, offices, and initiatives that have duplicative goals or activities. Since 2011, congressional implementation of recommendations from GAO’s reports, “[Additional Opportunities to Reduce Fragmentation, Overlap, and Duplication and Achieve Billions of Dollars in Financial Benefits](#),” has directly resulted in nearly \$670 billion in financial benefits, as well as improved coordination and reducing of mismanagement. FMA anticipates the 2026 annual report and urges Congress to closely evaluate and address the matters and recommendations included.

## **6. MANDATE AND FUND FEDERAL SUPERVISORY TRAINING PROGRAMS**

*Congress should pass legislation establishing initial and ongoing mandatory training requirements for all managers and supervisors across the federal government.*

- Current law allows managerial training throughout the federal workforce to be among the first to be eliminated when facing a lean budget or continuing resolutions.
- Studies show that many federal employees are promoted to managerial positions based on their technical performance and lack the soft, managerial skills needed for their expanded positions.
- FMA supports the Federal Supervisor Education Act of 2025 (H.R. 5810), which establishes mandatory training programs across the federal workforce focusing on certain management aspects such as mentorship, career development, prohibited personnel practices, and collective bargaining rights.

Current law requires agencies to establish training programs for managers and supervisors focusing on how to address poor performing employees, enhance mentoring skills and conduct accurate performance appraisals. However, there is no requirement for managers to participate in these training programs, and when budgets are tight or CRs are in place, these discretionary programs are often the first to see their funding cut.

Studies have shown that agencies often promote individuals to managerial status based on technical prowess, but then fail to develop their supervisory and leadership skills. In doing so, agencies severely jeopardize their capability to achieve their missions. The development of managerial skills is one of the greatest investments an agency can make, both in terms of productivity gains and the retention of valuable employees. Following the scandal within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) that brought to light falsified patients' wait times and improper care, it was noted that if managers better knew how to address poor performers and encourage efficiency and effectiveness throughout the VA, many of those problems could have been avoided.

An agency's ability to meet its mission directly correlates to the quality of workforce management. There is a clear need for training if a manager is to be fully successful. Too often, if an agency promotes an individual to managerial status based on technical prowess, but then fails to develop the individual's supervisory skills, that agency then severely jeopardizes its capability to deliver the level of service the American public expects and does a disservice to both the manager and to the employees supervised by that inadequately developed manager.

Toward that end, FMA endorsed the **Federal Supervisor Education Act of 2025 (H.R. 5810)**, sponsored by Rep. William Timmons (R-SC), requiring agencies to provide supervisors with training on various management topics, including mentorship, career development, prohibited personnel practices, and collective bargaining rights. FMA is grateful the House passed the bill by voice vote and urges the Senate to also consider and pass the bill.

## **7. ALLOW ALL FEDS TO MAKE DEPOSITS FOR NON-DEDUCTION SERVICE**

*Congress should allow Federal Employee Retirement System (FERS) employees to make deposits for non-deduction service performed, in the same manner as Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) employees and former military personnel.*

- Prior to 1989, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) allowed all federal employees to buy back years, including service as a temporary employee, toward their retirement accounts. Since then, only CSRS employees have been allowed to make these catch-up payments.
- FMA supports the Federal Retirement Fairness Act (H.R. 1522), to allow FERS, FERS-Revised Annuity Employee (RAE), and FERS-Further Reduced Annuity Employee (FRAE) employees to make deposits for non-deduction service performed in the same manner as CSRS employees.

Under the Civil Service Retirement System, non-deduction civilian service performed after September 30, 1982, is creditable for retirement annuity computation purposes, other than average salary, only if the employee pays a deposit for that service. Service on or before September 30, 1982, is creditable for annuity computation without a deposit; however, 10 percent of the deposit owed will be permanently deducted from the annual annuity.

Currently, a Federal Employee Retirement System employee may make a deposit for non-deduction service performed before January 1, 1989, and receive credit toward his or her annuity computation; however, non-deduction service performed on or after January 1, 1989, generally is not creditable under FERS for any purpose.

FMA supports the **Federal Retirement Fairness Act (H.R. 1522)**, bipartisan legislation introduced by Reps. Gerry Connolly (D-CA), David Valadao (R-CA), Nikki Budzinski (D-IL), and Don Bacon (R-NE), which would allow FERS employees to buy back years served as temporary employees to credit toward their retirement in the same manner as CSRS employees. Rep. Emily Randall (D-WA) assumed first sponsorship of the bill in July 2025, following the death of Rep. Connolly.

The legislation has 124 bipartisan cosponsors and we urge Congress to consider and pass it in the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress.

## 8. COMMON-SENSE MODIFICATIONS TO MAKE COLAs MORE ACCURATE AND FAIR

*Congress should pass legislation to provide a fair COLA for FERS retirees and to remove the COLA disincentive to early retirement.*

- **Congress should pass the Equal COLA Act (H.R. 491 / S. 624), which would remove the cap on FERS retirees' COLAs.**
- **Congress should eliminate the COLA disincentive to early retirement.**

FMA supports legislation that would fix unfair and arbitrary policies that limit cost-of-living-adjustments (COLAs) for Federal Employee Retirement System (FERS) retirees and seniors.

In 2026, the COLA for the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) is 2.8 percent, and it is 2.0 percent for FERS retirees. Under current law, FERS retirees only receive a full COLA if the difference in the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) is 2 percent or less (as in 2021). If the difference is between 2 percent and 3 percent, FERS retirees receive a 2 percent increase. If the change is 3 percent or higher, as in 2022, FERS participants receive 1 percentage point less than the full increase.

Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-VA) and Sen. Alex Padilla (D-CA) introduced legislation, the **Equal COLA Act (H. R. 491 / S. 624)**, which would correct this inequality and align the FERS COLAs with those of CSRS and Social Security beneficiaries. Rep. James Walkinshaw (D-VA) has assumed lead sponsorship of the bill since his election to fill Mr. Connolly's seat. FMA urges Congress to pass the Equal COLA Act in the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress.

Additionally, in order to save the government money, FMA urges Congress to optimize federal employee staffing by eliminating the COLA disincentive to voluntary early retirement.

Federal agencies cannot optimize their workforce when staffing levels are too high because the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) does not provide a COLA to federal employees that accept a voluntary early retirement. The older Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) did provide a COLA to incentivize early retirement.

Congress provides federal agencies tools to manage the workforce when staffing levels are too high. Two primary tools are Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA) and Voluntary Separation Incentive Pay (VSIP). Many FERS employees did not accept the Differed Resignation Program (DRP) VERA or VSIP offers from federal agencies in 2025 because a COLA was not provided for early retirement.

5 U.S. Code 8462(c)(3) disincentivizes employees from retiring when the federal agency needs them to. As a result, the government continues to pay higher salaried employees that otherwise would have accepted early retirement. Those employees end up retiring later with much higher annuity costs to the government. FMA urges Congress to eliminate 5 U.S. Code 8462(c)(3) in order to save the government money. More years of government service means higher salary, which means higher annuity costs. The earlier an employee retires, the lower their lifetime cost to the government.

## **9. PROVIDE CAPITAL INVESTMENTS TO RESTORE AND MODERNIZE FACILITIES**

*Congress should authorize capital investments across the federal government to restore and modernize facilities to meet operational needs.*

- **Facilities and infrastructure across the government are in dire need of significant restoration and modernization, and many are not meeting operational needs.**
- **FMA urges Congress to appropriate the necessary resources and funds to facilities and infrastructure across the country.**

The bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, passed in 2021, has been hailed as a major success for improving infrastructure across the country. Regrettably, infrastructure needs at federal government facilities remain unaddressed and require similar upgrading, restoration, and modernization.

For example, the four public shipyards perform prodigious work to maintain the fleet that helps keep our country safe. Unfortunately, all four of them are in “poor condition,” and are not meeting the Navy’s operational needs. GAO Report GAO-17-548,<sup>1</sup> released in September 2017, details many of the infrastructure issues. This is a readiness concern and a threat to national security.

In 2018, the Navy estimated a need of \$21 billion over twenty years for dry dock investment, facilities layout and optimization investment, and capital equipment investment at the shipyards. However, a June 2023 GAO Report<sup>2</sup> states those costs have risen significantly since then. We already know investments are needed now for the shipyards to support the USS Gerald Ford Class aircraft carriers and the USS Virginia class submarines.

The GAO reported in 2020 that between 2015 and 2019, the average idle time where nuclear aircraft carriers and submarines had to wait for maintenance had increased from 100 days to 1019, an increase of 919 percent. The GAO also found that some shops at the four public shipyards were forced to rely on up to 45 percent overtime to complete their scheduled maintenance, and that the average lifespan of the heavy equipment needed for maintenance at the shipyards had expired in 2015. CBO projections estimate that “projections of the shipyards’ workload and capacity indicate that the submarine fleet’s size will exceed the yards’ capacity to maintain it, not only over the next several years, but in 25 of the next 30 years.”<sup>3</sup>

It is important to note that restoration and modernization, including information technology, are issues that apply to agencies across the federal government, including the Social Security Administration, the Internal Revenue Service, and others. As the frontline managers who work in these aging facilities and strive every day to complete our agencies’ missions, FMA urges Congress to make necessary investments in facilities and infrastructure at the four public shipyards and across the government.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-17-548>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-23-106067.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/57083>

## **10. PROMOTE ACCOUNTABILITY AND REFORM HIRING**

***Congress should promote accountability consistent with merit system procedures, and provide managers with tools to deal with poor performers.***

- **FMA supports accountability in the federal workforce and ensuring managers have the tools they need to address poor performers.**
- **FMA supports hiring reforms to reduce time-to-hire, better communicate with job applicants to the federal workforce, and better utilize technology.**

### Improving Performance Management

Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Acting Director Charles Ezell issued a memo in June 2025 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.

FMA supports the overarching goal of improved performance management and accountability. We support transparency and the clear distinction on what is necessary to achieve performance at different levels, including fully successful. We also support the effort to provide managers with the ability to effectively address poor performers as well as to reward high performance. FMA would support congressional action providing these and other tools to supervisors to address poor performers, provided they are consistent with merit-system principles.

We are concerned about reverse quotas that may artificially limit individual performance – if an employee is fully successful, they should not be hampered because their colleague is, too.

### Improving Federal Hiring

In May 2025, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) issued a memo titled “[Merit Hiring Plan](#)” that outlines a major overhaul in federal hiring policy. The plan was issued pursuant to President Trump’s directive that “brings to the federal workforce only highly capable Americans dedicated to the furtherance of American ideals, values, and interests.” FMA supports much of this effort, including the goals of reducing time-to-hire and the emphasis on skills-based hiring, as included in the Chance to Compete Act. We want to recruit, hire, and retain the best and the brightest to federal service.

FMA has concerns with one aspect of the plan, specifically regarding the essay questions required of all candidates seeking a position at or above the General Schedule 5 (GS-5). FMA is concerned with how answers to these hiring questions are graded or ranked, and by whom. As Congress continues its oversight, we recommend a better approach is to ask applicants to write about what part of the agency’s mission is most significant to the jobseeker.

## **11. CONTINUE TO UTILIZE AND ENHANCE TELEWORK AND REMOTE WORK IN THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE**

*To significantly reduce costs to American taxpayers, as well as reduce the federal government's footprint, agencies should effectively utilize telework options for employees across the federal workforce.*

- Covid-19 demonstrated the federal workforce has the technology and capability to sustain productivity while teleworking.
- Allowing federal employees to telework when practical will greatly assist with recruitment of younger employees into government, and also help retain employees with years of valuable experience. Currently, we are witnessing many employees leaving government for positions in the private sector that allow partial or full telework. Prospective younger employees are used to a hybrid work environment and expect the benefits of both in-office and telework experiences.

Telework and remote work have been shown to be viable and sustainable options for many in the federal workforce, and should be continued. Many of the benefits of telework are well known, including a reduction of the federal footprint, environmental benefits from less commuters on the roads, and in many cases, increased productivity. Toward that end, the Government Accountability Office provided testimony in November 2019<sup>4</sup> listing key practices that can help ensure the success of telework programs. Of course, there will always be jobs where telework simply is not an option – more than 53 percent of federal workers are not eligible to telework due to the nature of their jobs. You cannot turn a screwdriver on an aircraft carrier or work on classified documents from the couch in your living room.

For the rest of the workforce, the Administration is steadfast behind its Return to Office order. However, given the flexibilities that technology allows us, it is vital that Congress take steps to strengthen federal telework plans and ensure the federal government can compete with the private sector.

FMA supports the **Telework Reform Act (S. 82)**, sponsored by Sen. James Lankford (R-OK). This bipartisan bill would collect important data, including expected cost savings and productivity outcomes related to remote work and telework. Importantly, it would also enhance training, monitoring, accountability, and reporting.

Managers are often blamed for impeding implementation of telework among their employees, but this could be remedied with managerial training on how to best supervise teleworkers. This training would go a long way toward easing concerns of managers and create a fair and transparent situation for both the manager and employee. Government must invest in its managers so that they are empowered to confidently and fairly administer remote work and telework programs that seamlessly mesh with the ongoing work of all employees, with the overriding goal of accomplishing agency missions. FMA urges legislators to pass S. 82.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gao.gov/assets/720/710740.pdf>