

THE DECISIONS WE FORGOT TO REMEMBER –

And Why They Matter Most



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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.



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Checklist

All Lists | In Progress | Completed

2026 Self-Improvement Goals

- ☐ 7,500 Steps
- ☐ Eat More Protein
- ☐ Drink More Water
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- *The Washington Report*, FMA's monthly e-newsletter, summarizes how FMA is looking out for you.
- Access to FMA's Action Letter Library, which empowers you to easily and effectively communicate with your members of Congress through personalized correspondence that can be sent from your phone.
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From Our President...

THE HEART OF FMA'S MISSION: ADVOCACY AND ENGAGEMENT

I hope you had an enjoyable and strong finish to your summer and are carrying that momentum into the months ahead. As the holidays begin to come into view, this is a powerful moment for us to refocus on what makes FMA effective: our people, our voice, and our willingness to act. In my first letter as your newly elected President, I asked each of you to help advance two priorities: growing FMA membership and strengthening our advocacy through the Legislative Action Center and Action Letters. Those priorities remain front and center. Every conversation you have with a friend, colleague, or coworker can help introduce someone new to the value of FMA. Every Action Letter you send helps ensure federal managers are seen, heard, and represented.

On Tuesday, July 28, we held an energizing and informative Town Hall, *"Government Affairs Update and Connecting with Members of Congress During Recess."* I opened the meeting by highlighting the many ways FMA keeps members informed, including the monthly FMA Washington Report e-newsletter, the Grassroots Update e-newsletter, our quarterly e-magazine, The Federal Manager, and timely email updates. Just as important, we want to hear from you. Your questions, concerns, experiences, and ideas help guide our work and strengthen our impact. Greg Stanford, FMA Director of Government and Public Affairs, provided an excellent update on what is happening in Washington and what FMA is focused on, along with practical guidance for preparing for and meeting with senators and representatives. The discussion was thoughtful, timely, and encouraging.

Engagement and advocacy are at the heart of FMA's mission. Engagement is how we build relationships with elected officials and share real-world issues affecting federal managers. Advocacy is how we turn those concerns into action and help shape better public policy. It is easy to wonder whether one voice can make a difference, but the truth is simple: it can, and yours does. Our *Day on the Hill* at

the national convention is always inspiring, but our advocacy cannot end there. Meeting with elected officials in their district offices can have a meaningful impact, and you do not have to do it alone. The FMA website includes tools to help you get started, and Greg Stanford is always willing to assist.

Now is the time to lean in. Engagement and advocacy are more important than ever. Last year, we experienced the longest government shutdown in history, a record-breaking 43-day closure that underscored how deeply funding uncertainty affects federal employees, agencies, and the citizens we serve. Thankfully, the House of Representatives and Senate passed, and President Trump signed, H.R. 6500, the Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2027, into law. The legislation includes a short-term continuing resolution that provides fiscal year 2027 appropriations to federal agencies through December 11, 2026. Passage of well-considered annual appropriations bills are always preferred, but this legislation averts a shutdown on October 1.

I am also excited to share that we have released our new *We Are FMA* video, a strong new tool for telling our story and spotlighting the value of this association. A huge thank you goes to our friends at Norfolk Naval Shipyard who did an outstanding job capturing footage during our March convention and bringing this message to life. Soon, we will also release two 30-second videos for use on social media platforms. I encourage you to use these resources proudly in your recruiting efforts and in every opportunity to share who we are and why FMA matters.

Thank you for the work you do every day in service to our citizens, our armed forces, your agencies, and your local communities. Thank you for bringing energy, professionalism, and commitment to the federal workforce. Most of all, thank you for standing with FMA. Together, we can increase our membership, strengthen our advocacy, and continue building an association that makes a difference. ●

Sincerely,

Linda S. Lentjes
FMA National President

COVER

THE DECISIONS WE FORGOT TO REMEMBER —

And Why They Matter Most

By Zina Sutch, Ph.D. and Patrick Malone, Ph.D.

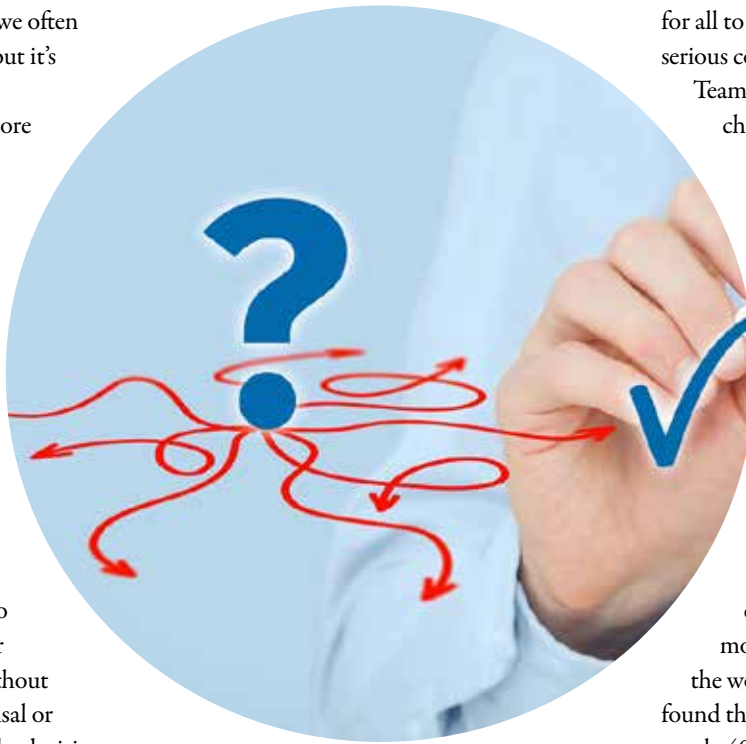


We all have a full-time job that we often fail to recognize. Hard to believe but it's true. Beyond our professions, our relationships, our hobbies, even more often than we brush our teeth. We're talking about decision-making, an occupational requirement of being alive, and the bane of management practice for centuries.

When one stops to think about it for a moment, the presence of decision-making in our lives is overwhelming. We do it every single day, without fail. We might go for a day or so without having to be in a Zoom meeting, or commute into the office, or deal directly with our boss. We may go a few months without having to do a performance appraisal or read a financial report. But we make decisions every single day. Sometimes they plague us. If you happen to be a procrastinator, they can incapacitate you.

The data tells the story. Decision-making consumes our day to the tune of about 35,000 decisions per day for the average adult. If you do the math on this, it equates to about 2,000 decisions per hour – or one decision every two seconds. Think about it this way, by the time you get to the end of reading this paragraph (which takes about 50 seconds), you have already made somewhere in the ballpark of 25 decisions. Should I keep reading? Should I make some tea? Is that word spelled correctly? Should I stop and check my phone messages? Isn't this article great? What about my lunch plans today? On the latter, research at Cornell University asked participants to estimate how many food-related decisions they made per day. Most thought it was in the arena of 15 or so choices daily. The actual number? Over 200 – specifically, about 221-227 decisions each day related to food. Now that's commitment!

Given the sheer number of decisions that we make in a day, it is a neurological miracle that we can find the time, much less think through and execute a good decision. There is simply no way that we would be



able to engage in deliberate analysis for every decision that we have to make. Our decisions are guided by environmental prompts, pattern recognition, heuristics, and previously established neural pathways – not intentional thought. In other words, the brain is constantly deciding...while pretending it is not. If we attempted to give analysis to every single decision that we are faced with in a 24-hour period, productivity would collapse and we would find ourselves buried in a deluge of uncertainty. So, it's a good thing that the brain takes care of many of these choices automatically. It's one of the beauties of the human brain in that it prefers to conserve energy for serious issues that require significant attention – complex judgments, ethical dilemmas, and, occasionally, existential crises. So far, so good.

Leadership and the Decision Trap

As leaders and managers, things get a bit more complicated. We are faced with the need to evaluate and assess on a daily basis. And these decisions are not only on display

for all to see, but they can also have very serious consequences to the organization.

Team members and bosses expect our choices to be reasoned and effectively implemented. Complicating things further, leaders are expected to not only be good decision makers, but they are expected to be thoughtful, empathetic, strategic, caring, and fair. And despite this seemingly impossible combination of factors, managers report that they struggle with decisions. In the workplace, ineffective decision making can cost a typical large organization millions of dollars. A comprehensive study of more than 1,200 business leaders across

the world by McKinsey & Company found that executives spend, on average, nearly 40 percent of their time making decisions. Some devote up to 70 percent of their time to decisions. And get this – less than 50 percent of these leaders felt that decisions were made efficiently. Only 20 percent believed their organizations excelled at decision-making.

So how do we as leaders deal with the decision-making puzzle? Historically, we have focused on frameworks. The work of practitioners and scholars offer us a pallet from which we can select matrices, ladders, charts, and/or graphics – all painstakingly designed for us to apply when facing a big decision. They're all fine, and have some limited value in specific situations, but the truth is they can trap us into a false sense of security. Models will change, theories will come and go, and perspectives on decision making will vary. Entire industries are built on this certainty. There will be new approaches, fancy graphics, and complex decision-making frameworks every year. What doesn't change is the human being and basic human needs, and this is where the traditional focus on decision making falls short.

Here's an example. Consider the case of Margaret (real person – made up name). She

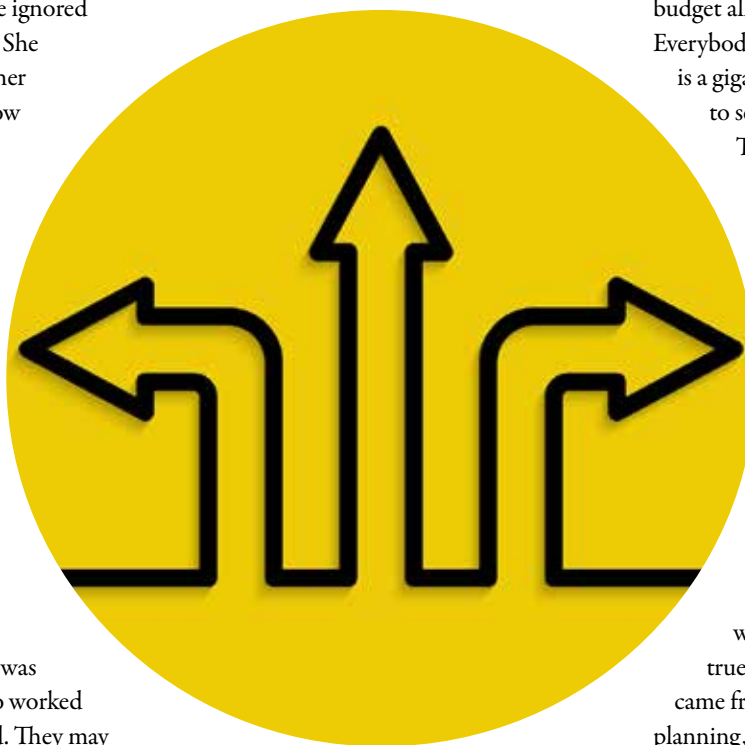
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was a senior federal executive, who was doing everything right and still getting it wrong. Margaret was a seasoned senior leader. She attended all the trendy programs, graduated from the right schools, and was running a large federal agency. She begrudgingly did all the things that good leaders are supposed to do, talked with employees in the cafeteria, holding all hands meetings, talking about how she cared. In short, everything she learned in school about how to be a good leader. We guarantee that she was familiar with all of the trendy decision-making models and was using them to help her in her new position managing large scale change. Budget decision? Check. Project management decision? Check. Strategic planning review? Check.

Margaret was failing though. She ignored the decisions that matter the most. She never showed any vulnerability of her own. People never really got to know her. Her interactions were sterile, mechanical, and predictable. There were no real connections being made. Further, Margaret made the mistake that many seasoned managers make – they assume they’re doing everything right. Let’s say that again, everything right. She was caught up with her title, her success, and her own bad self. So far in her career, many of her decisions she made depended on the sterile, one-size-fits-all framework. She was technically successful. At least that is what she was thinking. In reality, the people who worked for her were completely disengaged. They may have smiled politely, but they didn’t really care. They certainly didn’t trust. Margaret’s focus on her leadership report card was a trap. It had all the right boxes checked, but she was failing to make the types of decisions that could have changed everything.

“This is not about how you choose to make your decision. This is about the decisions that you choose to make.”

This is a critical distinction. It is not about the way we make decisions; it is about the types of decisions we choose to make. These are the decisions we forget to remember, and the ones that make the real and lasting difference in our organization.



The Decisions We Chose to Make

Our agencies are full of knowledgeable managers doing their very best. They work to create trusting and inclusive environments, all the while staying mission focused. They seek to grow trust where employees can

act without fear of retribution and seek innovative and creative solutions to the challenges of the workplace. Along the way leaders make a lot of decisions. And it would be safe to assume that they instinctively focus on the decisions that make the most difference impact for the organization. Right? Uh, no...not so much.

The problem for many of us is we often get caught up in what we refer to as *big LITTLE* decisions. They are filled with pomp and circumstance. They involve meetings, presentations, expert input, and occasionally slide decks with way too many words and far too little imagination. They are cluttered with a frenetic pace that fuels passion and anxiety. These are highly visible, structured, and often ceremonious decisions – operational plans, budget allotments, program implementation. Everybody in the agency knows that this is a gigantic decision and all are waiting to see what the big result will be!

The organizational impact meter is ticking wildly, awaiting the proclamations of the Grand Poohbah of decisions. Don’t get us wrong here. We aren’t saying that these decisions don’t matter. They do, sometimes. But other times it’s just another organizational decision, a *big LITTLE* decision that comes and goes, and is followed by another *big LITTLE* decision. Many represent incremental adjustments within existing systems rather than true transformation. They read as if they came from an MBA curriculum – strategic planning, marketing, IT infrastructure, market-share. They may make a modest difference, but they are predictable, routine, and fixable.

The decisions that matter most operate quietly in the background. These are the decisions that often appear to be insignificant. They don’t require approval from political appointees, or governing boards, or councils. They are not decisions that are tied to budget approvals or committee assessments. They are often invisible choices, and they require very

minimal effort. They consider the vibes of the moment when, with a little mindfulness, a little self-awareness, and a little social sensitivity matter. Lastly, these choices create a disproportionate and lasting impact on the people and the organizations we serve as leaders. These are *little BIG* decisions.

What if, because we spend so much time chasing big little decisions, little BIG decisions go unaddressed?

Little BIG decisions require something that more rote business-type decisions don't: intentional attention to human beings. This can be something as simple as offering encouragement to a colleague who may be struggling during a challenging project. It may be taking a moment to recognize an individual employee's contribution to a project or having their back if they are confronted in an unprofessional way. Maybe it's popping into the office of someone who you know may need a kind word or a sign of support. And sometimes, it's simply the art of listening. All of these activities suggest that someone is important, that they matter, and that we care.

LittleBIG



Decisions of this nature cost absolutely nothing. They are free. They take very little time, and their impact on employee wellness can literally change the culture of an organization. One private sector study reported that organizations with high employee well-being scores enjoy stock value that is on average 20 percent higher compared to the Standard and Poor's 500 stock index. Additionally, 87 percent of senior leaders consider employee emotional and physical health a competitive

advantage and 90 percent of organizations that pay attention to employee emotional and physical health have a positive return on investment. And employees return the love. MetLife found that when employees feel compassion and appreciation, they are 1.3x more loyal and 1.2x more productive. Another study encompassing seven different industries revealed that those who worked in environments marked by affection, tenderness, caring, and compassion for one another found more happiness in their jobs, were more devoted to their companies, and felt more accountable for their day-to-day work performance.

Over time, the difference between the leaders who value the *little BIG* decisions becomes substantial – not because of strategy, but because of daily choices. *little BIG* decisions influence culture. And culture determines how strategy is executed. Here's an example of what this might look like on a given day:

- 8:00 AM: Attends the morning huddle with senior leadership (*big LITTLE* decision)
- 8:30 AM: Reviews a strategic plan draft (*big LITTLE* decision)
- 9:30 AM: Declines a meeting request

from a staff member without explanation (*little BIG* decision)

- 9:45 AM: Ignores emails that have been in the inbox for 3 days (*little BIG* decision)
- 10:00 AM: Pops into a colleague's office to congratulate them for becoming a grandparent (*little BIG* decision)
- 11:00 AM: Provides vague feedback in a performance discussion (*little BIG* decision)
- 1:15 PM: Compliments team member on their presentation at the morning huddle and asks follow-up questions (*little BIG* decision)
- 2:00 PM: Approves a budget allocation (*big LITTLE* decision)
- 4:30 PM: Sends a brief but appreciative note to a team member (*little BIG* decision)

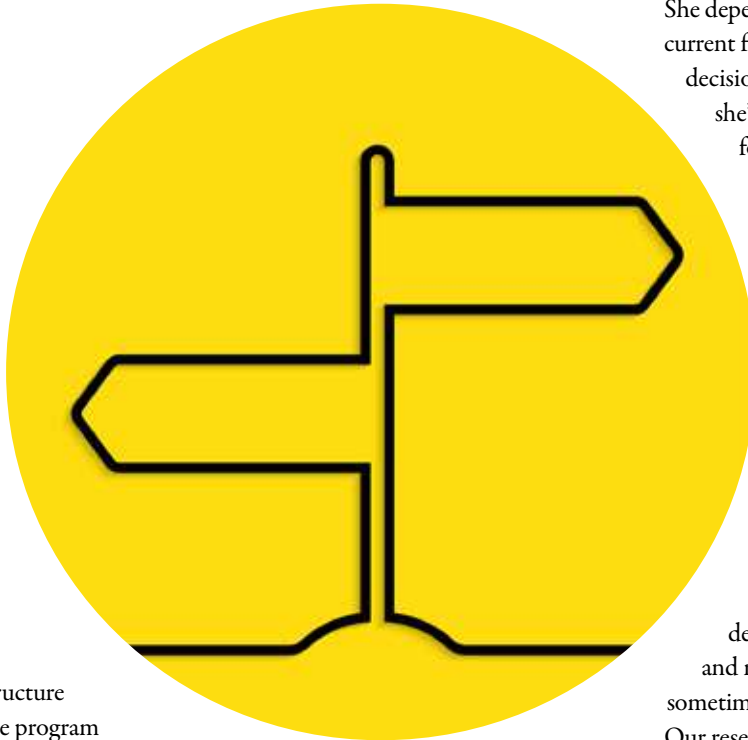
Get the idea? Of these, which will have the most lasting impact? Our research suggests that it is not likely to be the review of a strategic plan draft, or the approval of a budget allocation. Rather, it is the time spent to connect personally with other human beings in and around you. It's providing some encouragement and maybe a little forgiveness along the way. It's being genuinely curious and caring.

Understand that the purpose here is not to diminish the importance of formal decisions. It is not that *big LITTLE* decisions are unimportant. They are essential, but they are incomplete. They help us decide what an organization will do but they do not address how people will do the work. Rigor and connection can and should coexist. The problem is as leaders, we often invest disproportionate time in decisions that are visible and measurable, while underestimating decisions that are relational and cumulative. Don't ignore either, but opt for the *little BIG* if you want to nurture creative and innovative organizations that are focused on mission accomplishment.

continued on next page

Epilogue — Where's Margaret?

You probably won't be surprised to hear that Margaret moved on from her position. She's in a different organization now and not only is she making the same mistakes that she made before (she wouldn't read our first book) she still fails to recognize the impact of her decisions. What remains astonishing is that Margaret approaches her decision-making the same way she approaches her leadership. She depends on the structure that she was taught in her graduate program



or read in the Harvard Business Review. She depends on the latest acronym and the current fad. She fails to recognize which decisions are the important ones because she's so caught up in posturing and then following the recipe. Her textbook approach continues to fall short.

The hard fact is that *big LITTLE* decisions are always going to be the ones that fill our calendars. They are necessary, they are visible, and sadly, they are unavoidable. But decades of research into decision-making have placed these choices at the forefront of what is required to be an effective leader, and nothing could be further from the truth. The trick is to recognize decision-making as both omnipresent and multifaceted. Sometimes trivial, sometimes risky, sometimes very high stakes. Our research suggests that the decisions that

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matter most are sometimes considered to be the least important, perhaps the softer decisions, the ones that are air quoted when people roll their eyes in a vain attempt to ignore human nature. But ... these are the decisions, the brief conversations, the moment of forgiveness, the encouragement, the giving of our time that ultimately make the biggest organizational difference. These are the *big LITTLE* decisions. ●

Zina Sutch, Ph.D., served as the Director of a private school for students with emotional and behavioral disorders before joining the federal government and ultimately being promoted to the Senior Executive Service. She serves as faculty in the Key Executive Leadership Program in the School of Public Affairs at American University teaching courses on leadership, team-building, and succession planning.

Patrick Malone, Ph.D., worked in the health care industry in the private sector before he joined the Navy and served for 23 years in the Medical Service Corps. He earned his Ph.D. in Public Administration and American Government from the School of Public Affairs at American University and is currently the Director of the Key Executive Leadership Program. He teaches courses on emotional intelligence, adult development, and leadership.

Authors of multiple publications, their much-anticipated book Little BIG Decisions was published in fall 2025. You can learn more about the authors at sutchmalone.com.

**Little BIG
decisions require
something
that more rote
business-type
decisions don't:
intentional
attention to
human beings.**

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federal HR leadership



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MEET YOUR FMA NATIONAL EXECUTIVE BOARD

The Federal Managers Association is led by the National Executive Board. These are leaders who have dedicated themselves to utilizing FMA to ensure the Association serves you and all of its members the best that it can. Since 1913, federal managers, supervisors, and executives have looked to FMA to help them become better public servants and leaders, while also looking after their interests as employees of the federal government. At FMA's recent 88th National Convention, Former National Treasurer Linda Lentjes was elected National President. Chapter 14 President James Cappa was elected National Secretary. Former Chapter 11 President Savanna Massey was appointed National Treasurer to fill the remainder of Linda Lentjes' vacated term. Additionally, Chris LaRose was re-elected as Region 1 Director, and Doreen England was re-elected

as Region 3 Director.

We have asked our newly assembled board members to introduce themselves. One thing every Executive Board member agrees upon is they want to provide you with the best possible membership experience, and to continue to ensure federal managers' voices are heard, loud and clear, by Congress and the administration. Meet the 2026-2027 FMA National Executive Board!

Linda S. Lentjes, *National President*

I am deeply honored and inspired to serve as your Federal Managers Association National President. Throughout my career,

I have been privileged to serve in leadership roles at both the regional and national levels, and I currently serve as President of Chapter 396. I am grateful for the opportunity to stand alongside our dedicated membership, national staff, and Executive Board. Together, we have already accomplished so much, and I believe our greatest achievements are still ahead of us. As we continue to grow, strengthen our voice, and support one another, we can make an even greater impact for federal managers, employees, retirees, and the nation we serve. Professionally, I serve as



the Resource and Requirements Director at U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. Fourth Fleet at Mayport Naval Station in Jacksonville, Florida. I began my Department of Defense career 44 years ago as a GS-2 temporary clerk, and through experience, hard work, and education, I have continued to grow throughout my federal career. I hold a Master's in Business Administration from Jacksonville University. I have a strong background in administration, manpower, and finance.

I am married to Curtis, and we have three children and four grandchildren. I believe strongly in maintaining good health through physical fitness and in learning something new each day. In my personal time, I enjoy spending time with my grandchildren, gardening, and volunteering at church.

As your President, I pledge to honor the strong leadership of those who came before me while helping guide FMA into the future with energy, purpose, and resolve. I look forward to working side by side with you to strengthen our association, expand our reach, and ensure that the voices of federal managers are heard clearly and respectfully. Most importantly, I thank each of you for the vital work you do every day in service to our nation. Your dedication matters, your voice matters, and together, we can continue making a lasting difference. Thank you for your continued support of FMA.

Christine Parker, National Vice President

FMA is near and dear to my heart. I have been an active member for 28 years, and I am proud that we are still the #1 professional organization for all career fields in the Federal Civil Service.

I started my federal career



in 1981 as a temporary-overhire clerk typist. Over a span of 33+ years, I performed a wide scope and varying depths of job duties, from Clerk-Typist to Specialist, to Flight Chief, to Division Chief.

I hold an Associate's Degree in Management, a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business and Management, and a Master's Degree in Family Services. Additionally, I completed Air Command and Staff College, Leadership Development, and Joint Service manager training.

I have been a member of the VFW Auxiliary, Post 8076 (Hartwell, Georgia). I have served as Junior Vice and currently serve as Secretary. I served on the ROTC Scholarship Committee, the District and State of Georgia Patriot's Pen and Voice of Democracy 2023 and 2024. I was a key player for the VFW Post 8076, Wreaths Across America project. I am instrumental in the continued growth of the Post 8076 Auxiliary from 36 members in 2021 to 130+ members as of March 2026.

I have been an FMA member since 1998 and am the Treasurer for Chapter 121, Robins Air Force Base, Georgia. At the national level, I served as Secretary, Treasurer, and am currently Vice President.

I am also the Retiree Committee Chairperson for FMA, and write a quarterly article for The Federal Manager magazine.

My husband Robbie and I live in our dream home on Lake Hartwell in Hartwell, Georgia, with our "wild-child" Yorkshire Terrier, Betty. Our three adult children have blessed us with eight grandchildren, ranging from 3 years to 21 years. I love to travel, captain our pontoon around the lake, cook, and spend time with family and friends.

Savanna Massey, National Treasurer

I serve as Director of F-35 Aircraft Maintenance at Fleet Readiness Center Southeast (FRCSE) in Jacksonville, Florida, where I lead one of the Navy's premier depot

maintenance organizations supporting fleet readiness.

A U.S. Navy veteran, Lean Six Sigma Black Belt, and

graduate of the NAVAIR Journey Leadership Development Program, I have more than 17 years of leadership experience spanning military service, federal civilian management, and private business ownership.

Throughout my federal career, I have led large, cross-functional organizations responsible for aircraft production, workforce development, and process improvement. I helped launch the F-35 Corrosion Speed Line, an innovative production model that significantly reduced aircraft turnaround time while improving quality and fleet readiness. My leadership has earned recognition for operational excellence, mentorship, and developing high-performing teams.

In addition to my federal career, I owned and operated a 19,000-square-foot sports and fitness facility, where I oversaw strategic planning, financial management, marketing, staffing, and daily operations. The experience strengthened my perspective on fiscal responsibility, organizational leadership, and serving diverse communities.

An active member of the Federal Managers Association, I previously served as President of Chapter 11, Fleet Readiness Center – Southeast, Jacksonville, Florida, before being appointed National Treasurer. I am committed to strengthening FMA's financial position, increasing transparency, supporting chapter success, and advocating for federal managers across the government.

I hold a Bachelor's degree of Applied Science in Organizational Management and



continued on next page

an Associate degree of Applied Science in Electronics. I live in Northeast Florida with my husband, a retired U.S. Marine, and two daughters.

James Cappa, *National Secretary*

I currently serve as the C/350 Off-Hull Assistant Production Superintendent at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard (PSNS) and am in my ninth term as President of FMA Chapter 14, Puget Sound Naval Shipyard, Bremerton, Washington.



Beginning my government career at PSNS in 1994 with Shop 72 Riggers, I have advanced through a series of critical leadership roles, including Work Leader, Supervisor, Lead Shop Reactor Servicing General Foreman, Division Nuclear Manager, and Nuclear Assistant Project Superintendent. Throughout my career, I have overseen all Nuclear Lifting and Handling operations across three shipyards and played a key role in submarine recycling and disposal operations. My exceptional performance and dedication to the mission have been recognized with multiple Special Service and Special Act Awards.

A dedicated FMA member since 2009, my leadership has been vital to the growth of Chapter 14, the second largest chapter in the Association. As President, I am a tireless advocate for the rights, benefits, and future of federal workers. I champion early-career mentorship by encouraging apprentices to join FMA, while also driving initiatives to

engage retirees as Lifetime members. My tenure has been defined by community impact and operational excellence. I have also expanded charitable outreach across four counties, successfully streamlined chapter operations, and led major community relief efforts – including highly successful drive-through food and toy drives – during the pandemic.

Recognized for my steady, adaptable leadership style, I prioritize institutional best practices and board cross-training to ensure my chapter is prepared for the future. I have also successfully revitalized member engagement through large-scale community and sporting events.

A lifelong Washington resident, I have called Gig Harbor home for over 40 years. Outside of my professional and advocacy work, I enjoy spending time with my wife, Adrienne, and our two sons, Randy and Justin. My hobbies include BBQing and smoking food, brewing beer, growing hops, hunting, camping, traveling, and boating.

No Bad Days!

Chris LaRose, *Region 1 Director*

I am proud to serve as the FMA Region 1 Director and President of Chapter 6, Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, Portsmouth, New

Hampshire, representing members across the Northeastern United States.

With a strong commitment to leadership and public service, I bring over 18 years of combined military and federal civilian experience to my roles within FMA.



I began my professional journey with four years of honorable active-duty service in the United States Marine Corps, where I developed the discipline, resilience, and leadership qualities that continue to guide me today. After my military service, I spent time in the private sector before joining the federal workforce.

For the past 14 years, I have served at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard where I play a vital role in national defense and workforce development. My extensive experience and hands-on leadership style make me a respected advocate for federal managers and their mission.

As Region 1 Director, I represent multiple chapters, promoting communication, policy advocacy, and professional development across the region. In my role as Chapter 6 President, I am known for fostering engagement, mentorship, and a strong sense of community among members.

Outside of my professional responsibilities, I am a devoted family man. My wife, Lori, and I live on several acres of land, where I enjoy spending time outdoors – working in the garden, splitting firewood, and appreciating the simple joys of country living. Together, we have five children and three grandchildren.

Grounded by my values and driven by service, I continue to lead with integrity, purpose, and a genuine passion for supporting others.

Sabrina A. Peet, *Region 2 Director*

Born and raised in Norfolk, Virginia, I've always had a passion for science, service, and family. In 2013, I relocated to Suffolk, Virginia, where I currently live with my family.

I began my federal career on August 7, 2006, at the Norfolk Naval Shipyard in Portsmouth, Virginia, as a



Chemist in the C134 Mid-Atlantic Regional Materials Test Laboratory after completing my Master's in Materials Science at Norfolk State University in May 2006. Starting as a GS-07, I steadily advanced to GS-13 Supervisory Chemist and Branch Head of the Nuclear Chemistry Division (C134.2) in April 2021. I also served as Acting Quality Manager for four months, gaining key leadership experience.

Passionate about making a difference beyond the lab, I attended my first Federal Managers Association meeting on July 14, 2021, and became a member that same evening. Motivated by the mission, I quickly got involved serving as Social Media Chair in January 2022, then Recording Secretary. I was appointed Region 2 Vice Director in March 2024 and was sworn in as Region 2 Director in March 2025. It's a privilege to serve on the National Executive Board, where I'm committed to growing membership and advancing FMA's mission.

I'm passionate about mentoring and building winning teams that foster excellence and growth. Outside of work, I enjoy traveling, reading, riding my Can-Am Spyder, going to the shooting range, baking, fishing, jet skiing, and anything water-related. I cherish time with family and friends and always seek new experiences that help me recharge.

Doreen M. England, *Region 3 Director*

I am a decorated leader at the Naval Surface Warfare Center (NSWC) in Crane, Indiana, and a dedicated advocate for the Federal Managers Association.

A member since 2019, I have served as President of FMA Chapter 170,



Naval Weapons Center, Crane, Indiana, since 2020. My exceptional leadership earned me the FMA President's Award in 2021 and the Odell Green award in 2026. I became Director of Region 3 in 2024 and was selected for the National Membership Committee.

Currently, I am a Cybersecurity Manager/Information System Security Manager within the PAE Mission Systems Branch at NSWC Crane. I began my career at Crane in 2018 as a Software Engineering Project Lead, delivering critical communications planning applications for the US Marine Corps.

In 2020, I transitioned to Branch Manager of the Cyber Systems Validation Branch, where my commitment to talent development and innovation earned me both the "One Voice, One Team" and "Innovation" Command awards. In 2022, I supported the Strategic Systems Hypersonic Program Office in Washington, D.C., as Cybersecurity/Information Systems Security Manager, overseeing cybersecurity for the Conventional Prompt Strike Program and coordinating full cyber life-cycle missions with national leaders.

Dedicated to service, I founded and led NSWC Crane's "Health & Wellness" Employee Resource Group and currently serve as a mentor.

A native of Washington, Indiana, I reside in Linton, Indiana, where I actively support my community by volunteering for local food drives, monthly lunch programs, and holiday charity initiatives.

Pat Niehaus, *Region 4 Director*

I'm Pat Niehaus, Region 4 Director. I'm also President of Chapter 167, Travis Air Force Base,

California, and National President Emeritus. I've been a member of FMA and Chapter 167



since the late 1980s. It's been an honor to belong to such a respected Association that consists of so many great people. We are also fortunate to have our national staff to keep the association running. We'd be lost without them. I retired from federal service in 2022 (no more HR crises!) and have enjoyed spending time with friends and family since then. It's been an amazing 40 years watching FMA grow and change with the times. I've met so many wonderful people through FMA and I'm very grateful to FMA for that and for everything I've learned from the Association over the years. ●



HOW YOU CAN CONTRIBUTE TO TEAM FMA TODAY!

*Three Simple, But Powerful Actions That
Every FMA Member Can Take Right Now*

By Carol Green

Many members join a professional association to contribute to its mission and to be a part of the positive impact of public service. With that in mind, here are three simple, but powerful actions you can take today to support TEAM FMA as an engaged member. By regularly contributing in these areas, you will be helping FMA remain a vibrant and powerful organization.



1. Recruit Your Colleagues to Join Team FMA

Why You Should Help

FMA needs to be seen as an organization with a growing and engaged membership for our voice to remain powerful within our workplaces, on Capitol Hill, and in our communities. But as you know, the federal workforce has faced challenges, and subsequently FMA membership has taken a hit as many members either retired or left government service for other reasons. Yet, there are still about 200,000 federal managers, supervisors, and executives serving in the government today, and it's essential that we welcome more leaders from the federal workforce to FMA!

How You Can Help

The most effective way to grow FMA membership is through word of mouth! A persuasive pitch to your colleagues goes a long way to get the word out that FMA is a great value for the money. So please look for

opportunities in your workplace to do this important outreach.

Tools to Assist Your Recruiting Efforts

- Share our terrific new We Are FMA video One idea is to text the video to your colleagues to follow up on in-person conversations.
- Reach out to your Chapter leadership to get a copy of your Chapter's membership application and other Chapter-specific recruiting materials.
- Visit the FMA Membership Center and Why You Should Join FMA to learn about membership benefits and how we are representing your interests on Capitol Hill in DC.
- Download materials from our Virtual Recruitment Kit, including a fact sheet and a summary of FMA Advocacy successes.
- Keep an eye out for FMA Membership Recruitment Campaigns for the opportunity to be entered in a recruiter drawing for gift cards. (Our next recruitment campaign kicks off in February 2027.)

ACTION ITEM

Make a pledge today to speak to at least a colleague or two every month about the benefits of joining Team FMA. And be sure to share our We Are FMA video too!

Note for Members at Large

You could be a huge catalyst for FMA's membership growth as you have direct access to potential members in your workplace that we are currently unable to easily reach! Please visit the FMA Member At Large Recruitment Center for special opportunities and tools to assist in your efforts.

Also, reach out to the National Office to learn how to start a Chapter within your workplace – you could form a local Chapter with as few as three members!

2. Make Your Voice Heard with FMA's Action Letter Library

Why You Should Help

Did you know FMA's Action Letter Library is available for you to send letters to your elected officials anytime from your preferred electronic device? And your family, friends, and all allies of federal workers may also send letters through our portal provided they are U.S. Citizens over 18 years old.

Sending action letters to members of Congress is a powerful tool FMA members have as constituents to voice our concerns and influence policy decisions impacting federal managers. When large numbers of people speak out together, it demonstrates widespread public sentiment and increases pressure on lawmakers to act.

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MEMBERS IN ACTION



Letter August 2026 campaign with another following in April 2027.

Our goal is always to send 1,000+ letters during these campaigns, but as more of our members (plus allies!) join the movement, the sky is really the limit for how many letters could be sent. Imagine the impact this will continue to have as we advocate for our issues with lawmakers on Capitol Hill!

Beyond that, Action Letter campaigns within your own Chapter are a fantastic way to engage your members and encourage teamwork. To that end, consider regularly scheduling time during your business meetings and events to send letters as a group.

How You Can Participate

- Commit to writing FMA Action Letters on a regular basis, including during the Action Letter campaigns in April and August. You could even set reminders in your calendar today!
- When FMA announces a new letter has been added to the Action Letter Library, be sure to send it to your elected leaders right away.
- When you write your FMA Action Letters, ask a colleague, friends, or family members to do the same to support you.

A Note on Action Letter Campaigns

You may have participated in our Action Letter August and Action Letter April campaigns. During our inaugural month-long Action Letter campaign in August 2025, 48 FMA members and eight allies sent an impressive 805 letters. In April 2026, 76 FMA members and four allies sent 926 letters. In these two campaigns, 1731 total letters were sent and a movement was born!

I write this in the midst of our Action

continues to be – the benevolent backbone of our federal community.

How You Can Participate During the Holiday Season

Let's work together and see how much money we can raise for the FMA-FEEA scholarship fund during the upcoming holiday season! Please consider making a donation. Whether your Chapter wants to "pass the hat" and make a lump sum contribution, or you choose to make an individual contribution, we hope you will consider participating. The FMA National office will match the first \$250 in donations!

Scholarship money is distributed in the summer, but you will know during this holiday season that you donated to a fellow fed or their family member's future education. And selfless giving is always a terrific feeling, especially this time of year!

ACTION ITEM

Give the FMA Action Letter Library a try right now! See how quick and easy it is to send an action letter to your elected leaders from your phone, tablet, or laptop.

***Important reminder regarding FMA Action Letters:** Be mindful of the Hatch Act – any action should take place outside of a federal installation and on your own time.

3. Be a Team FMA Philanthropist

The Federal Employee Education and Assistance Fund (FEEA), is FMA's official charity. FEEA exists to make sure that federal and postal employees always have somewhere to turn. Whether providing scholarships to federal employees and their children, or giving much-needed financial assistance when disaster strikes, FEEA has been – and

ACTION ITEM

Make a donation today to help Team FMA raise at least \$1,000 for FEEA's scholarship fund by December 15, 2026. No donation is too small!

Thank you in advance for participating in these three very important initiatives for the betterment of FMA. We feel that membership growth, advocacy efforts, and community involvement are areas that all FMA members should be enthusiastic about. And if every member regularly contributes in these areas, FMA will continue to be a vibrant association and a leader of improvement for our workplaces, communities, and before policymakers in DC.

If you have other ideas on how FMA members can come together for the greater good, please reach out to me any time at cgreen@fedmanagers.org or share your ideas during a future Membership Committee meeting held bimonthly on Zoom. ●

Carol Green is FMA's Finance & Membership Coordinator.

WE ARE FMA!

Have You Watched FMA's Two-Minute Video?



By Carol Green

This summer we debuted *"We Are FMA!"* – our terrific new video that captures the spirit, purpose, and impact of the Federal Managers Association that serves as a wonderful introduction to our mission and a reminder of the important work our members accomplish every day.

Watch the Video

We hope this video makes you proud to be a part of FMA whether you are a longtime or newer member, a chapter member or a member at large, a leader of a chapter or a member interested in learning more about FMA.

How You Can Use this Video

- Text or email it to your colleagues and other prospective members. (Remember, non-managers are welcome to join FMA as Associate members.)
- Use it to "close the deal" after speaking to prospective members
- Play at Chapter meetings and recruitment events

- Watch it to fire yourself up before a recruitment event
- Share with anyone who asks, "What is FMA?" including your command or higher ups
- Watch it to remember what a great association you belong to!

Let Us Know

Will you use this video in other places or for other means? Please share your ideas!

Action Item

Widely share the video as suggested above! Do you have a network or resource within your workplace that might be a free or low-cost resource for a project for the greater good of FMA? We are all ears! Please contact the FMA National Office to share your ideas or attend a future Membership Committee meeting held bimonthly on Zoom. Contact me at cgreen@fedmanagers.org and I will add you to future committee reminder emails.

About This Video

Filmed during FMA's 88th National Convention and Management Training

Seminar, the video features our National Executive Board members and staff who discuss what makes our association such a valuable resource for federal managers, supervisors, executives, and all federal employees. From the professional relationships built through chapter meetings and national events to our non-partisan advocacy on Capitol Hill, the video highlights the many ways FMA serves our members and the federal workforce.

Special Thanks

This project would not have been possible without the outstanding support of the Department of the Navy, whose talented production team generously donated their time and expertise to bring this vision to life. We extend our sincere appreciation to Jeris Smith, President of FMA Chapter 3 at Norfolk Naval Shipyard, for connecting FMA with this exceptional group of professionals. Their creativity, professionalism, and dedication have produced a video that truly reflects who we are as an association. ●

Carol Green is FMA's Finance & Membership Coordinator.

MEMBERS IN ACTION

FMA ANNOUNCEMENTS



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

Attend FMA's National Convention & Management Training Seminar

We are pleased to announce FMA's 89th National Convention and Management Training Seminar will be held March 22-24, 2027, in Alexandria, Virginia. If you have ever visited Old Town Alexandria, then you know that it offers a variety of restaurants and entertainment of all kinds, and it's a great

place to bring family and friends for a visit. If you have not visited Alexandria, you'll find it is just a few minutes from Washington, D.C., and full of history in a beautiful setting.

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

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

National Executive Board Elections

The positions of FMA National Vice President, National Treasurer, Region 2 Director, and Region 4 Director are up for

election at the 2027 National Convention. All nominations must be submitted no later than January 15, 2027. Contact 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 their service? Work with your Chapter President to nominate them for an FMA award. Chapters should submit nominations for FMA's **Manager of the Year** and **Gil Guidry Award** to their respective Region Director no later than February 5, 2027. Each chapter may submit one nomination for each award. To learn more about these awards, and the nominating process, visit:

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EMERGENCY LOANS | DISASTER RELIEF | SCHOLARSHIPS | CHILDCARE SUBSIDIES

Have you heard about FEEA?

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



FEEA

FEDERAL EMPLOYEE EDUCATION & ASSISTANCE FUND



YES! I am proud to support FEEA: THE FEDERAL EMPLOYEE EDUCATION AND ASSISTANCE FUND and federal public servants and their families. Enclosed is my gift of:

☐ \$25 ☐ \$75 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$500 ☐ Other: _____

Please make check payable to FEEA or donate by credit card via our website: www.feea.org/give

NAME: _____ PHONE NUMBER: _____

ADDRESS: _____

EMAIL: _____

MAIL TO:

Federal Employee Education And Assistance Fund, 1641 Prince Street, Alexandria, VA 22314

Donations to FEEA are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowable under the law.



For more information about FEEA's programs, please visit www.feea.org

DONATE TODAY AT: WWW.FEEA.ORG/DONATE

Contact: fedshelpingfeds@feea.org | 202-554-0007

MEMBERS IN ACTION

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 5, 2027. Forward resolutions to Greg Stanford, Director of Government Affairs, at gstanford@fedmanagers.org.

Send FMA Action Letters

We hope you took part in FMA's Action Letter August campaign to inform your elected officials in Washington about your challenges and concerns as a federal manager, supervisor, executive, or federal retiree. When FMA members send Action Letters, FMA's message is exponentially strengthened on Capitol Hill! FMA members and staff make up Team FMA and the more each of us does, the greater the dividend for all.

Update Your Contact Information – Especially Personal Email

To ensure you are receiving all FMA communications, make sure to provide us

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

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

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

SHOW YOUR FMA PRIDE!

Visit www.fedmanagers.org/Products to order FMA polo shirts, magnets, umbrellas, and a perennial favorite – the FMA embossed leather portfolio! You'll also find FMA flash drives, lapel pins, lanyards and more.

They make great gifts!



CHAPTER SPOTLIGHT: **CHAPTER 19 – PEARL HARBOR AREA, HAWAI'I**



FMA Chapter 19 (Pearl Harbor Area, Honolulu, Hawaii) members gather frequently to serve their community and enjoy one another's company. Whether giving blood, cleaning up the roadside, or attending a social event or convention, Chapter 19 members are always smiling and sharing Aloha spirit in all they do. Mahalo, Chapter 19, for representing FMA so beautifully!

Would your Chapter like to be spotlighted in a future issue of *The Federal Manager*? Simply email your best photos to cgreen@fedmanagers.org!



WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH FEDERAL PAY?

By Greg Stanford



I was frustrated but not surprised when the news came at the end of August that President Donald Trump formally called for a pay freeze for federal employees in 2027. “I have determined that for 2027, base pay and locality pay for civilian federal employees will not change from the 2026 rates,” Trump wrote in an August 26 alternative pay plan letter to House of Representatives Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA).

Although he had proposed a 5-7 percent raise for the uniformed military in his Fiscal Year 2027 budget request earlier in the year, Trump stayed silent on a boost for the civilian workforce and Congress has thus far followed his lead. As you may know, the House Appropriations Committee rejected an amendment to include a 3.6 percent pay raise offered by Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-MD) by a party-line vote, with 28 Democrats supporting and 32 Republicans in opposition. Financial Services and General Government Subcommittee Chairman David Joyce (R-OH) referenced President Trump’s ability to utilize an alternative pay plan, calling the committee’s rejection of a pay raise, “the reality of politics, and exactly why we have elections every four years.”

FEPCA

Under the Federal Employees Pay Comparability Act (FEPCA), created in 1990 to reduce the pay gap between federal employees and their private sector counterparts, an automatic formula sets annual pay raises and regional locality pay for federal General Schedule (GS) employees.

However, Title 5 of the United States Code authorizes the president to implement the alternative pay adjustments if they deem “national emergency or serious economic conditions affecting the general welfare,”

call for it. The August alternative pay plan acts as the definitive mechanism used to set federal civilian salaries, often averting much larger default increases dictated by the FEPCA formula. Since 1994, every president, Republican and Democrat, has bypassed the FEPCA formula and used the alternative pay plan.

“Without this alternative pay plan,” Trump wrote, “under current law, beginning in January 2027, locality pay for the civilian workforce would automatically increase by an average of 20.6 percent, costing \$26 billion in the first year alone.”



Last year, President Trump originally proposed a pay freeze for feds, but issued a 1 percent raise for 2026 in his alternate pay plan. He followed through with a pay freeze for 2027.

Regrettably, with salaries scheduled to remain locked at 2026 levels, federal employees will fall even further behind private-sector counterparts. 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. A 1 percent raise this year and a pay freeze planned for next year will only exacerbate the situation. FMA has consistently advocated for Congress and the Administration to provide for a fair and reasonable pay raise that reflects the needs of the workforce. For 2027 we strongly endorsed the Federal Adjustment to Income Rates (FAIR) Act (H.R. 7480 / S. 3823), sponsored by Rep. James Walkinshaw (D-VA) and Sen. Brian Schatz (D-HI), which would provide an average 4.1 percent pay raise next year. Unfortunately, the bill has not been considered by either chamber.

Salary Inversion at Department of the Navy

While the pay freeze will undoubtedly negatively impact all federal employees, it will be a double whammy for a growing number of employees at the Department of the Navy who are dealing with salary inversion issues.

Wage Grade (WG) and Federal Wage Service (FWS) employees’ pay rates are determined by survey studies, compared to how the rates for GS employees are determined. In recent years, WG and FWS employees have received well-deserved boosts and pay differentials. We fully support these hard-working employees earning fair compensation for their work. However, it is also resulting in many WG employees not accepting promotions into management because they can earn more in their current position. And a growing number of managers who recently accepted promotions regret

continued on next page

their decisions because they would have earned more at their prior level had they not been “promoted.” Managers at Norfolk Naval Shipyard report employees are earning \$6-\$8 more per hour than their direct supervisors. The issue is compounded due to the WG employees’ ability to earn overtime pay.

All too often it is resulting in more and more Navy GS employees supervising non-GS employees who now earn more than them. As FMA National President Linda Lentjes put it, “it is troubling when managers and supervisors earn less than the very employees they are charged to lead. Morale is understandably suffering among managers who now earn less than if they had not been promoted into management. This is harming the government’s ability to recruit and retain strong leaders. Why would anyone want the extra responsibility and liability of managing people if it means a pay cut? There is a limit to managers’ tolerance to this situation – they will either head to the private sector or step back into non-management jobs where they can earn more. In fact, this has already begun.”

Pay Caps

At the same time, the federal pay ceiling cap has not kept up with the higher cost of living in many cities across the United States. This is yet another ongoing issue that plays a role in recruitment and retention to the federal workforce. Once again, 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.



is too rigid to accommodate diverse agency missions.

We agree, and we support a broad overhaul of the general schedule, including pay reform. We are proud to work in a non-partisan manner with Sen. James Lankford (R-OK), Sen. Maggie Hassan (D-NH) and others, on ways to address these vital issues. Federal managers and the American public deserve no less.

But we know it won’t be easy, if for no other reason than that these issues have been challenging decision makers and the federal government for a very long time. President John F. Kennedy was writing about many of these very same pay issues as far back as February 1962.

Kennedy wrote federal employee salaries should be, “high enough to attract and retain competent personnel, sufficiently flexible to motivate initiative and industry, and comparable with the salaries received by their counterparts in private life.” But even back then, 62 years ago, Kennedy wrote: “Too many federal employees are underpaid in proportion to their responsibilities. Too many receive smaller salaries than are paid by many private industries, and even by many state and local governments, for less responsible work. Too many top-grade or supervisory federal employees are paid little more, and sometimes even less, than their subordinates.”

Sound familiar?

In that 1962 message, Kennedy referenced the pay gap between federal employees and the private sector was 20 percent. He wrote about the need for career federal managers to have keen judgment, experience and competence and to be compensated fairly for their work. And he wrote the success of the government and our nation depend on the quality of our career services. That is as true today as it was then.

History and a Call for Reform

The General Schedule is complex and in many ways outdated, particularly as it governs federal employee compensation. For many years FMA has advocated for a modernization of the GS. In fact, FMA supports many of the conclusions outlined in a white paper on this topic in April 2002 written by Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Director Kay Cole James.

James noted the outdated structure of the GS, relying on antiquated pay system that doesn’t capture what managers do in the 21st century. She pointed out the cumbersome process for pay increases and locality adjustments that are disconnected from the market. She made a case for pay for performance. And she argued the current GS

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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. ●



Make an Impact: Donate to FMA-PAC

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

Visit www.fedmanagers.org/FMA-PAC for info on how you can contribute!

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





CAPITAL INSIGHTS

Both the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) and the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) approved their respective versions of the Fiscal Year 2027 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), clearing the way for consideration by their full chambers. After both chambers pass their respective versions, the differences between the bills will need to be ironed out before the bill can be sent to President Trump.

Notably, the Senate version prohibits any reduction in force (RIF), hiring delay, or hiring freeze at any of the four public shipyards or for any position funded by a working capital fund.

Among the differences between the bills, the Senate version authorizes a 3.6 percent pay raise for all military members, while the House version authorizes a 7 percent pay raise for all military personnel ranked E-5 and below, a 6 percent boost for E-6 to O-3, and a 5 percent raise for O-4 and above. Neither bill boosts spending for defense civilians. However, the Senate version allows the Secretary of Defense to establish the pay of wage-grade employees located at any defense industrial base facility, in an effort to make rates of pay comparable to the private sector and surrounding areas. ●

The Prevent Government Shutdowns Act (S. 4632), FMA-endorsed bipartisan legislation sponsored by Sens. James Lankford (R-OK) and Maggie Hassan (D-NH), was discussed in a House Appropriations Committee hearing in July 2026. The bill, reintroduced earlier that summer, 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 a new fiscal year begins.

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 remain in Washington, D.C., and work solely to restore funding. 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. ●

The Administration's deferred resignation programs (DRP) cost between \$11.1 and \$15 billion to pay feds to not work, according to Public Citizen in a recent report. Almost 140,000 federal employees voluntarily left government service since President Trump took office and offered incentives for their departure, resulting in the cost through March 2026. The costs could rise, as some agencies have offered new rounds of the DRP this year.

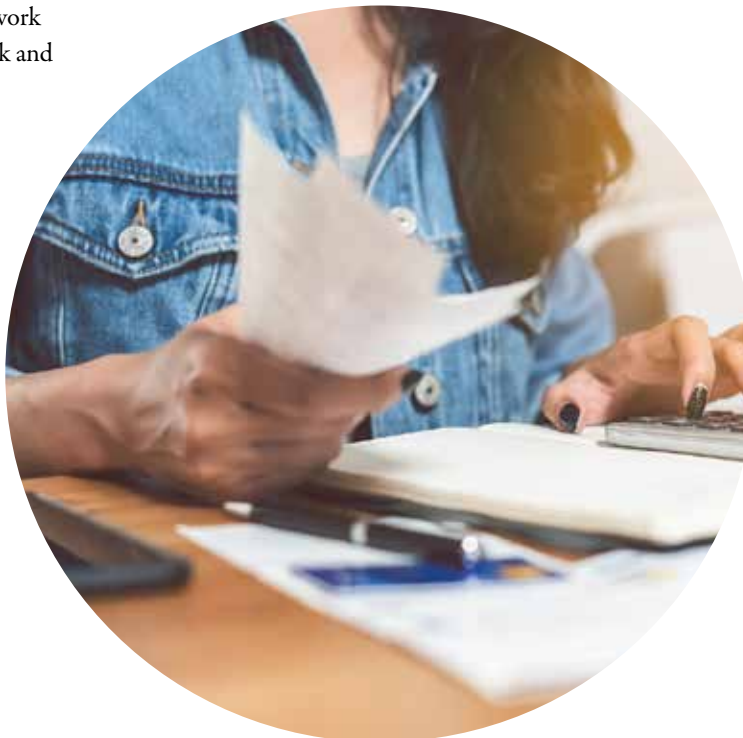
Initially begun with the "fork in the road" email from the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) in January 2025, feds were given an opportunity to resign but continue receiving a paycheck through the end of Fiscal Year 2025 (September 30, 2025). Retirement-eligible feds by the end of the year could be paid through 2025.

Despite the criticism of the costs for paying feds to stay home, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) responded to the report by pointing to longer-term savings expected as a result of the DRPs, which it estimates at \$20 billion per year going forward. ●

Kennedy cited two basic concepts: equal pay for equal work and distinctions in pay consistent with distinctions in work and performance. I believe we can all agree with both of those concepts, and should use those ideals as the foundational building blocks as Congress and the Administration work on solutions to these enduring challenges. And while big change takes time, interim steps should be taken to address the most pressing issues, including salary compression, salary inversion, and the reduction of buying power against inflation.

The federal workforce needs the tools – including fair and reasonable compensation – to attract and retain its next generation of high performing leaders. Anything less is neglecting and degrading federal service. ●

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



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MEET YOUR LEGISLATORS



U.S. SENATOR KEVIN CRAMER (R-North Dakota)

Kevin Cramer is the junior Senator from North Dakota. He was elected to the upper chamber in 2018 after serving as the At-Large Representative from North Dakota in the House of Representatives from 2013 to 2019. Cramer serves on the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC), the first ever North Dakotan to serve on the committee – where he currently serves as Chairman of the Subcommittee on Airland. He is also a member of the Subcommittees on Readiness and Management Support, Emerging Threats and Capabilities and Strategic Forces. As a member of SASC, Cramer has an influential voice on the annual National Defense Authorization Act, which is vital to FMA's interests. Senator Cramer also serves on the Veterans' Affairs Committee, the Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee, and the Environment and Public Works Committee.

Cramer has a long history of service in North Dakota. He worked on several campaigns before becoming chairman of the North Dakota Republican Party. In 1993 he was named state tourism director, followed by service as the state economic development director. He was appointed to the North Dakota Public Service Commission in 2003 and twice elected to the commission before his successful election to the House of Representatives in 2012.

Born in Rolla, North Dakota, Senator Cramer was raised in Kindred and received a bachelor's degree from Concordia College in Minnesota. He earned a Master's Degree in Management from the University of Mary in Bismarck, where he was also conferred the degree of Doctor of Leadership in 2013.

Cramer and his wife reside in Bismarck and have five children and six grandchildren. ●

THE FACTS:

Birthplace: Rolla, North Dakota

Born: January 21, 1961

Education: Concordia College, B.A., 1983;
University of Mary, M.M., 2003

Career:

- Member, U.S. Senate, North Dakota (2019-Current)
- Member, U.S. House of Representatives, At-Large, North Dakota (2013-2019)
- North Dakota Public Service Commission (2003-2012)
- Director, Harold Schafer Leadership Foundation (2000-2003)
- North Dakota Economic Development Director (1997-2000)
- State Tourism Director (1993-1997)
- Chairman, North Dakota Republican Party (1991-1993)
- Campaign Aide

Elected: 2024 (2nd term)

Committees:

- Senate Armed Services
- Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs
- Senate Environment and Public Works
- Senate Veterans' Affairs

Contact Information:

U.S. Senate
313 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
Phone: 202.224.2043
Website: <http://cramer.senate.gov>

U.S. SENATOR KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND (D-New York)



Initially appointed to the U.S. Senate in 2009, to fill a vacancy when Hillary Clinton was named U.S. Secretary of State, Senator Gillibrand serves as the junior Senator from New York. She was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, for the 20th District from New York prior to her service in the Senate.

In the 119th Congress, Gillibrand serves on both the Senate Appropriations Committee and the Senate Armed Services Committee, as well as the Select Intelligence Committee and the Special Committee on Aging, where she is the Ranking Member. She is a cosponsor of the Equal COLA Act (S. 624), FMA-endorsed legislation that would eliminate the two-tiered system of cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) for federal retirees.

Prior to her time in elected office, Gillibrand worked as a lawyer in private practice as both an associate and as a partner. She also served as a law clerk on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit and as Special Counsel to Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Secretary Andrew Cuomo. In 2000, Gillibrand worked on Clinton's successful campaign for Senate.

Gillibrand was born in Albany, New York, and received a Bachelor's Degree from Dartmouth College before earning a J.D. from UCLA School of Law.

Senator Gillibrand and her husband Jonathan have two sons and live in Albany. ●

THE FACTS:

Birthplace: Greenville, South Carolina

Born: December 9, 1966

Education: Dartmouth College, A.B., 1988;
University of California, Los Angeles, J.D., 1991

Career:

- Member, U.S. Senate, New York (2012-Current)
- Member, U.S. House of Representatives, New York, District (2007-2009)
- Partner, Boies, Schiller & Flexner
- U.S. Housing and Urban Development Department Special Counsel
- Law Clerk, Judge Roger Miner, U.S. Court of Appeals, 2nd Circuit
- Associate, Davis Polk & Wardwell

Elected: 2024 (3rd term)

Committees:

- Senate Appropriations
 - Agriculture, Rural Development, FDA, and Related Agencies
 - Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies
- Senate Armed Services
 - Cybersecurity
 - Emerging Threats and Capabilities
 - Strategic Forces
- Senate Select Intelligence
- Senate Special Aging

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YOUR GUIDE TO A STRESS-FREE BACK-TO-SCHOOL SEASON



By D.M. England

The shift from the relaxed days of summer to the structured reality of the school year can be a significant source of stress for both parents and students. As schedules suddenly fill up with classes, extracurricular activities, and homework, prioritizing health and wellness is essential to prevent burnout. A smooth transition isn't just about having the right school supplies; it's about proactively equipping your mind and body for the demands of the new season.



Establish Routines Early

Gradually adjust sleep schedules at least a week or two before the first bell rings. Shifting bedtimes and wake-up calls by 15 minutes a day helps reset the body's internal clock without the shock of an abrupt change. A consistent morning routine – like laying out clothes the night before – reduces morning cortisol spikes and sets a calm, predictable tone for the rest of the day.

Prioritize Nutrition and Hydration

Stress takes a physical toll, making proper nutrition your first line of defense against fatigue. Plan balanced meals rich in complex carbohydrates, lean proteins, and healthy fats to maintain steady energy levels and focus. Never skip breakfast, as it jumpstarts cognitive function and stabilizes mood. Additionally, keep a reusable water bottle handy; dehydration can easily mimic symptoms of anxiety and sluggishness.

Open Lines of Communication

Back-to-school anxiety often stems from the unknown, whether it's a new teacher, a new building, or shifting social dynamics and work schedules. Take time to sit down and openly discuss expectations and fears for the upcoming year. Validate feelings rather than dismissing them. Simply acknowledging that

change is hard and that it's normal to feel nervous can significantly reduce emotional tension.

Build in Mandatory Downtime

In the rush to get back into the swing of things, it is incredibly easy to overschedule. Protect your free time fiercely and ensure work-school-life balances. Establish dedicated blocks in the weekly calendar where no structured activities are planned, allowing the brain and body to decompress. Whether it's reading a book for pleasure, taking a family walk, or practicing mindfulness exercises, this downtime is non-negotiable for long-term mental health.

Key Takeaway: Flexibility is your greatest asset during this season. Not every morning will go smoothly, and that is perfectly normal. By establishing healthy habits early, maintaining open communication, and giving yourself grace during the chaotic moments, you can navigate the back-to-school transition with resilience and calm. ●

Doreen England is President of FMA Chapter 170, Naval Weapons Center, Crane, Indiana, and FMA Region 3 Director.

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Plan balanced meals rich in complex carbohydrates, lean proteins, and healthy fats to maintain steady energy levels and focus. Never skip breakfast, as it jumpstarts cognitive function and stabilizes mood.

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RETIREES

RETIREE MATTERS



By Christine Parker

Fellow FMA members, and prospective members,

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



Medicare Premium Increase Projected for 2027

The release of the 2026 Medicare Trustees Report provides an early look at where Medicare costs may be headed in 2027. While the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) will not announce official 2027 Medicare premiums, deductibles, and Income-Related Monthly Adjustment Amount (IRMAA) brackets until late 2026, the Trustees Report offers valuable projections that can help retirees and pre-retirees prepare.

For federal retirees and employees approaching retirement, understanding these projections is important because Medicare premiums can significantly affect retirement income planning. *Projected 2027 Medicare Premium Increases Released in Trustee's Report*

Why a FERS Retirement Pension May Be Lower Than You Think

Many federal employees assume that an annuity pension from the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) replaces a significant percentage of their salary. In reality, the average FERS annuity is often much lower than expected because the formula is based on only a small percentage of your high-3 average salary for each year you worked in federal service.

What Is the Average Gross FERS Annuity?

According to data published by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM), there are millions of federal annuitants receiving retirement benefits, but the average gross FERS annuity is generally estimated to be in the range of \$25,000 to \$35,000 per year, depending on retirement cohort and years of service. Learn more at: www.myfederalretirement.com

When Is the Best Time for a FERS Retiree to Start Taking Social Security?

For most federal employees covered by the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS), the answer to when is the best time to start taking Social Security retirement benefits depends on three factors:

1. Your need for income
2. Your health and life expectancy
3. Whether you are trying to maximize

lifetime or survivor benefits

There is no single best age for everyone, but there are some guidelines to help you make the decision best for you. Learn more at: www.myfederalretirement.com/when-take-social-security/

Last Day of Paper: OPM Closes the Book on 65 Years of Retirement Paperwork

On July 1, 2026, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) announced an end to paper retirement processing. Here is what the milestone and new Online Retirement Application (ORA) features mean for your retirement timeline.

Calling it the "Last Day of Paper," OPM ended paper-based retirement processing for more than 95 percent of federal retirement applications after more than 65 years of manual paperwork. The milestone completes OPM's transition to a fully digital retirement process built around its ORA. OPM added that ORA has processed over 155,000 retirement applications during the past year.

continued on next page

Alongside the paper milestone, OPM announced three new capabilities aimed at speeding up the payments retirees receive once they file: a pre-retirement application that lets employees and agency human resources offices complete much of the process before an employee's separation date; earlier processing of applications while final payroll data is still being finalized; and a formal commitment to issue a retiree's first pension payment within seven days of retirement for complete applications submitted by the separation date. Learn more at: www.fedsmith.com/2026/07/01/last-day-of-paper-opm-retirement-applications/

Leave Government Now, Get Your Retirement Benefits Later

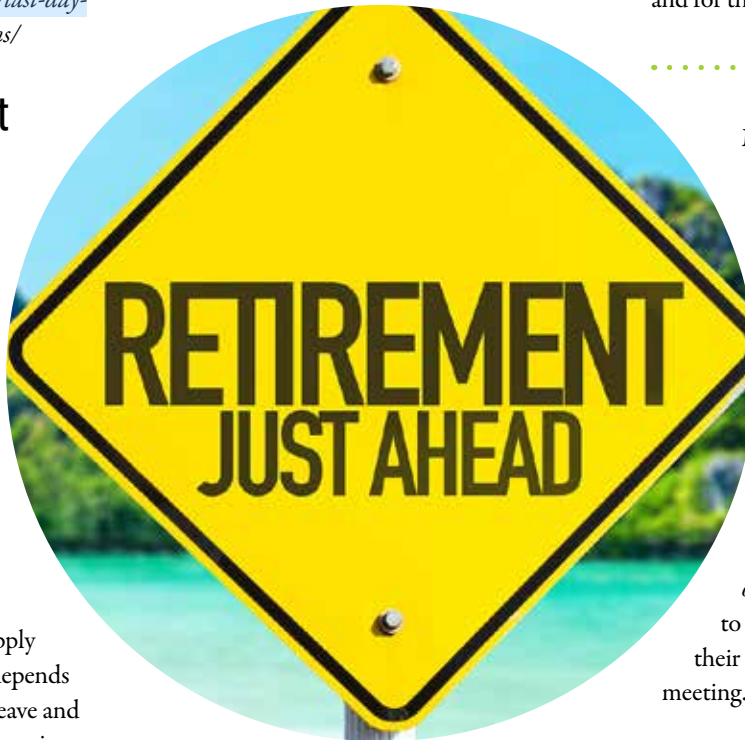
If you have five or more years of creditable civilian service but don't meet any of the combinations for immediate retirement when you leave government, you'll be eligible for a deferred annuity so long as you don't take a refund of your retirement contributions.

A former CSRS employee can apply for one at age 62. Under FERS, it depends on your years of service when you leave and your age. With at least five years of service, you'd be eligible for an unreduced annuity at age 62. With at least 20, age 60. If you had 30, when you reach your minimum retirement age (MRA). And, if you had at least ten but fewer than 30 years of service, you could retire when you reach your MRA, but your annuity would be reduced by 5 percent for every year (5/12 percent per month) that you are under age 62. You could reduce or eliminate that age penalty by retiring and delaying the receipt of your annuity to a later date.

Once your annuity begins, you'll receive it for the rest of your life. On the downside, your annuity will be frozen at the amount

it would have been on the day you left. The longer the time between when you resign from the government and when you are eligible to receive your annuity, the more your benefit will have been eroded by inflation. On the other hand, beginning at age 62 any future cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) will be added to your annuity.

Another point to consider: If you are a former FERS employee who is eligible for a deferred retirement before age 62, you won't be entitled to the special retirement supplement,



which approximates the amount of Social Security benefit you earned while a FERS employee.

Note: When you resign from the government, you'll receive a 31-day extension of coverage of your Federal Employees Health Benefits and Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance coverage at no cost to yourself. You'll also be able to continue your FEHB coverage for up to 18 months by paying the full premiums plus 2 percent to your former agency.

You may also elect to convert your FEGLI coverage to a private life insurance policy, for which you'd pay the premiums. However, as a deferred retiree, when your annuity begins, you won't be eligible to reenroll in the FEHB or FEGLI programs. Learn more at: www.fedweek.com/retirement-financial-planning/leaving-now-getting-retirement-benefits-later/

Final note: DO YOUR HOMEWORK. Retirement is one of the most important decisions you will make in life. Don't shirk on learning what is best for you and your family, and for the long term.

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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