

# The Federal Manager

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## PRESIDENT'S PAGE



*FMA National President  
Patricia Niehaus*

### Moving Forward!

Thank you for granting me the honor of representing you for another term as your National President. I appreciate your confidence and the tremendous support and encouragement I've received from you and the National Office Staff over the past two years. While I know we have a tough fight ahead of us, I look forward to two more productive years for the Federal Managers Association.

As many of you heard at the end of the National Convention, Jessie Klement has left FMA for another position within the federal association community. Her departure leaves a void in the National Office

that will be hard to fill. Jessie's extensive knowledge of our issues and concerns has been invaluable to the Association and she will be missed. We are actively searching for a new Government Affairs Director and will keep you posted. Another change in the National Office: Katie Redmond is returning! Some of you met Katie when she interned with us last summer. She's been hired as the Assistant to the Executive Director and will be handling a little bit of everything in the office. We're delighted to have her back with us!

The 2012 National Convention was a busy one! I was very pleased with the excellent training we were able to provide thanks to the efforts of our Executive Director, Todd Wells. The entire National Office Staff (NOS) works very hard to put on this annual event and I'd like to thank them all for a job well done! I'd also like to thank Renee Johnson and Chapter 21, and Glenn and Didi Todd of Chapter 187 for hosting this year's hospitality suite. Chapter 21 members Heather Eastman, Matt Glass, and Lori Glass were also instrumental to the memorable evenings. Thanks also to FMA's Vice President, George Smith, for his assistance with coordination. It's so nice to be able to spend the evenings visiting with our members in a relaxed atmosphere while munching on great food. In fact, the barbacoa tacos were the best I've ever had! Thank you, Didi! On our *Day on the Hill*, it was wonderful to see our members in the Halls of Congress (or between buildings). This is an important part of our National Convention and an opportunity to remind Congress that FMA members are their constituents and we vote! This message is going to be even more important during this election year.

Our NOS does a great job of representing our interests but they can't do it all. WE NEED YOU, our Members, to do your share too! When you receive a request to send an Action Letter from Katie Maddocks, FMA's Government Affairs Assistant, don't just let it sit in your in-box. Personalize it and send it to your representatives right away. Then let Katie know that you sent it. If you aren't getting the Action Letter messages, send the NOS a non-government e-mail as soon as possible. Hearing from you about an issue makes MUCH more of an impact on your Senators and Representative than hearing from Katie or me. After all, constituents elect Congress and they need to be reminded of that every time they vote against us. Also, don't forget FMA-PAC. If your representative is having a fund-raising event in your district or state, please contact Katie Maddocks or FMA-PAC Chair Leonard Lew. We get much more bang for our PAC buck if we send you to a local event.

Last but certainly not least, I am looking forward to celebrating our 100th Anniversary! *A Century of Dedicated Service to America*. You'll be hearing more about our plans in the months ahead but I'd like to encourage every chapter to start raising funds NOW to ensure that every chapter has AT LEAST one representative at this momentous event. We'll be celebrating at the historic Mayflower Hotel in downtown Washington, D.C., just blocks from the White House. Proclaimed by President Truman to be Washington, D.C.'s "Second Best Address" after the White House, this hotel is on the National Registry of Historic Places and is a Historic Hotel of America. We have a dinner gala planned to celebrate our historic achievement of 100 years of service. I look forward to seeing you there! ■

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#### Article Submission

All materials submitted to *The Federal Manager* should pertain to public service managers. Copy should be double-spaced, no longer than 10 pages.

High resolution color images, charts, or illustrations should be included if possible. Text should be submitted by email or on compact disc. Include a biography of the author.

Submit unsolicited articles to:

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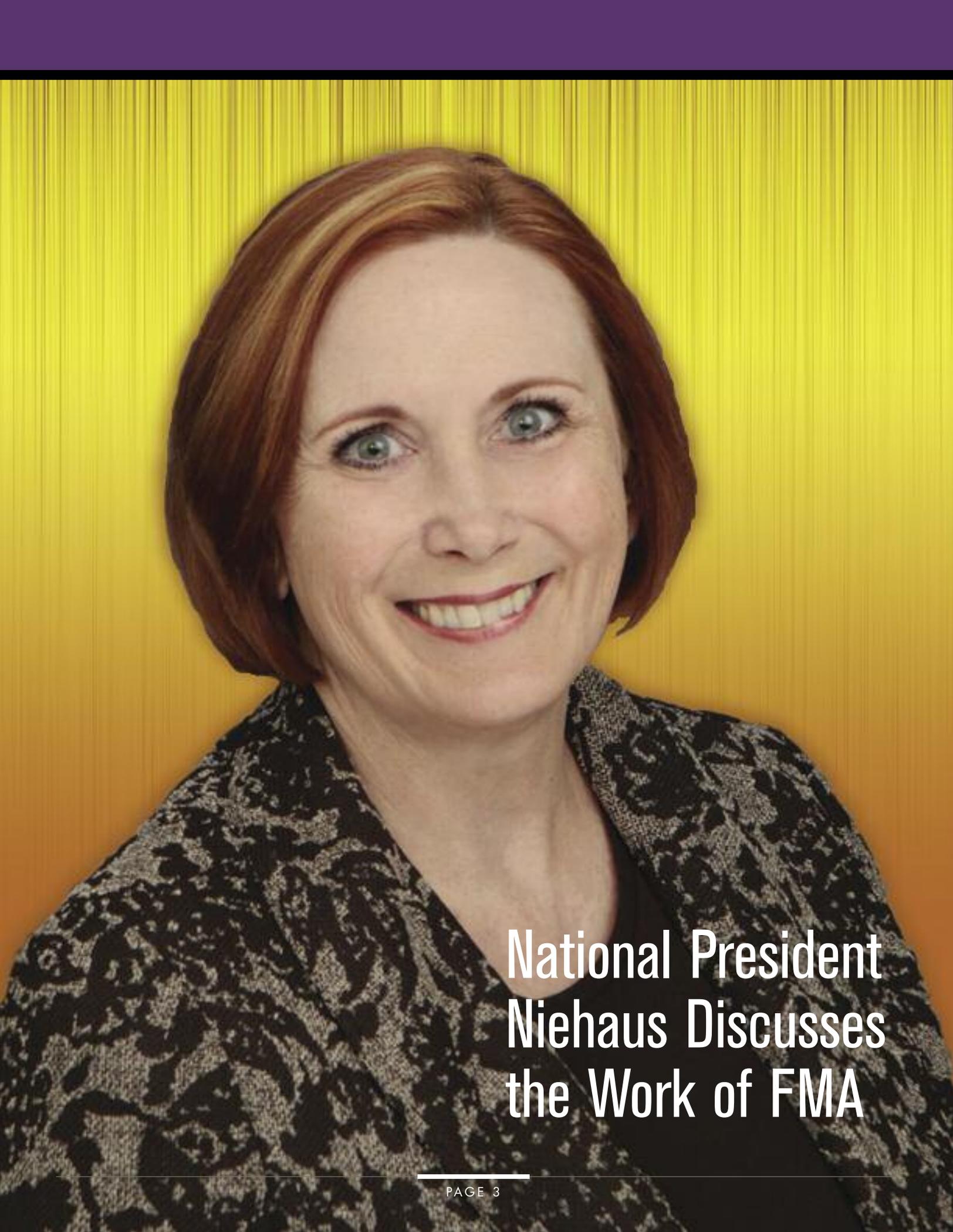
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# National President Niehaus Discusses the Work of FMA

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Having been reelected to another two-year term during FMA's 73rd annual National Convention in March 2012, it was agreed that this was a good time for FMA's National President, Patricia Niehaus, to sit down and review the work of the Association, what she foresees for federal managers in the coming years, and answer some other questions she has received from members. As any federal employee knows, the past two years have been unprecedented in the vehemence and number of threats by elected officials who seem determined to undermine the work of government, and sadly unconcerned about the hard working, middle-class Americans who carry out the Congressionally-mandated agency missions. It is the hope of *The Federal Manager* magazine that this interview offers insights into the work of FMA, and also helps members think anew about how FMA can best serve them.

## What impresses you most about FMA?

We are the best! We are the *premiere* management Association and have been at the forefront of so many major changes in the federal government. We're the oldest, too. Founded in 1913, in 2013 FMA will celebrate its 100th anniversary – *A Century of Dedicated Service to America*. What's not to love?

## What is the most important part of FMA?

That's an easy one: our members. We only exist as an Association because of our dedicated and involved members.

## What do you like best about being the National President?

Getting to know our members at meetings and conventions. Everyone has been so friendly and supportive. It's been an honor to serve this wonderful association and I'm thrilled to be the first woman to serve as National President.

## It has been two years since you became the first female president of the Federal Managers Association. Do you think gender plays a role in how you direct the Association, and how you are perceived by leaders in Washington?

As a baby boomer, it is a special thrill to be the first woman to represent FMA as the National President. I think that it is both good and bad that some people think that's irrelevant. It shows we have come a long way toward equality of the sexes, but also shows a lack of understanding of where we've been. I think I'm perceived as a professional representative of an Association of professionals and I think that continuing the tradition of the "conversational not confrontational" approach established by my predecessors has supported that perception. I'm also fortunate to have the support of our exceptional National Office Staff who work hard to make me and our Association look good.

## What is your impression of how FMA is viewed by Administration officials and Congressional leaders?

I am continually gratified by the respect we receive from Administration officials and Congressional leaders. We are regularly sought out to comment on many issues pertaining to the federal workforce and its management. One example is our seat at the table of the National Council on Federal Labor-Management Relations. FMA is one of only two management associations named by President Obama to participate on the Council as a member and I'm proud to be a Presidential Appointee to this Council.

## You became president during a difficult period for federal workers. What have been your greatest challenges?

Hands down, the biggest challenges are the attacks on federal managers by Members of Congress and the press. It is discouraging and infuriating to hear the federal manager so blindly criticized by so many people who should know better. We've seen repeated recommendations from the Executive and Legislative Branches for decreasing the federal workforce. This puts federal managers in the precarious position of trying to meet Congressionally-mandated missions and goals with decreasing personnel and resources.

Grassroots initiatives are especially important in this climate which leads to another challenge – the inactivity of far too many of our members. It continually surprises and saddens me that some of our members are not more active in communicating with their congressional representatives. FMA's Government Affairs Department is great about forwarding Action Letters that can be easily personalized and forwarded by FMA members to their Senators and Representative. This is one of the best ways members can help themselves, and it only takes a few minutes. If a member is not receiving these Action Letters by e-mail, it means they need to provide a non-government e-mail address to the National Office. I urge every member to do so.

## Do you see an end to the Fed bashing we have witnessed these past several years?

I really wish I could say “yes” to this question. Unfortunately, we feds have been all too accurately described as “the low-lying fruit” in the battles being waged on Capitol Hill. Federal managers are facing an uphill battle against bills calling for extensions of the federal pay freeze, reductions in workforce, and increases to retirement contributions.

Our jobs, pay and benefits are easy targets for a Congress that wants to be seen as saving money without regard for the impact of the all too often arbitrary cuts they propose on the services that we provide to the American people. I'm afraid we are going to continue to see more demanded from federal workers,

with declining resources. Of course, FMA will not stop to do what it can to reverse that trend. As we speak, we are working on a new campaign, along with several coalition partners, to ensure that key Members of Congress hear from federal employees on a regular basis. This is in addition to our constant efforts on Capitol Hill.

## There is certainly a lot of frustration out there, and rightly so. Do members sometimes blame FMA for not correcting the toxic situation on Capitol Hill?

We occasionally get a frustrated member calling to complain that FMA “must not be very effective” if it can't stop the President or Congress from imposing a pay freeze, or making employees contribute more to their retirement benefits. However, it is interesting to note that when we follow up with these disgruntled members, they are almost always the people who do not read the *Washington Report* (FMA's bi-weekly e-newsletter), do not read *The Federal Manager* magazine, and do not send the Action Letters we write for them to send to their Senators and Congressman. While we do our very best to help every single federal manager, we cannot force them to help themselves.

## Does FMA proactively try to convince Congress and the Administration to treat federal managers fairly?

Absolutely! That is what we spend most of our time doing, or at least trying to do. If you take a look at our Press Releases and other documents on FMA's website ([www.fedmanagers.org](http://www.fedmanagers.org)), you can see how we respond to unfair attacks and proposals. And you can see how often our Association is consulted on issues pertaining to feds. FMA is at the forefront when it comes to informing Members of Congress on how legislation will impact the federal workforce. Our staff works hard to maintain relationships on the Hill and to use those relationships to remind Congress and the Administration that we are valuable members of the government and our communities – not just people who show up to collect a paycheck.

## What can members do to best overcome the many challenges we have been discussing?

To help themselves, they need to actively communicate with their Senators and Representative. When FMA asks members to quickly personalize and send an Action Letter, it is not for the good of FMA, but for the good of our members, both active and retired. Members must understand that FMA National is always looking out for their best interests, but that sometimes, the individual constituent has the most power to help him- or

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# Niehaus Discusses the Work of FMA

*National President Niehaus Discusses the Work of FMA continued from page 5*

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The message I'd like to send our members is this: make sure your elected officials know that you are their constituent and that you vote.

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herself. Our National Office will let them know how to best help themselves and to guide them in the process.

**Is there anything else you would ask of FMA members? What message would you like to send?**

If every one of our members made themselves visible to Congress in their states and districts, we would no longer be perceived as easy targets. It's much easier for Congress to cut our jobs, pay and benefits when we're just anonymous feds. It's harder to look a constituent (or better yet, several hundred constituents) in the eye and say, "you need to sacrifice more and get so much less."

The message I'd like to send our members is this: make sure your elected officials know that you are their constituent and that you vote. Send the FMA action letters; e-mail your Senators and Representative; and, call and visit their District Offices. Hearing from a constituent always makes more of an impression than hearing from the president or staff member of an association. Hearing from both FMA members and FMA leaders is the best. We try to make it as convenient as possible for our members to contact their Representative and Senators to share views on legislation and the importance of federal employees. With the continual attacks FMA has seen against the federal workforce, educating elected officials is of the utmost importance.

**What has surprised you most about your time as FMA National President? What is the coolest part?**

I wasn't prepared for the recognition I've received. It still surprises me when someone comes up to me and says they've seen me in our magazine or read a quote from me in a news article. The coolest part is getting to meet people and participating in functions and projects that would never have been possible for me before I was elected to serve this incredible Association as its President.

**What are you looking forward to in your next two years as President?**

Our 100th Anniversary celebration is just months away. What an accomplishment for the Federal Managers Association! *A Century of Dedicated Service to America*. That's our theme for 2013. And I'm looking forward to the beginning of our next century. I hope we'll see a resurgence of respect for the federal manager and appreciation for the services we provide our country. You can be assured that is what we will be striving for, whatever may come our way. ■

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*To keep up-to-date about the work of FMA, visit: [www.fedmanagers.org](http://www.fedmanagers.org). If you are not receiving the Washington Report bi-weekly newsletter by e-mail, send FMA your e-mail address at: [info@fedmanagers.org](mailto:info@fedmanagers.org). It is important that you provide a "non-government" e-mail address to guard against Hatch Act violations. Remember, when writing or sending action letters always do so from a personal computer outside of a government facility.*