

March 31, 2014

Katherine Archuleta
Director
Office of Personnel Management
Theodore Roosevelt Federal Building
1900 E Street, NW, Room 5A09
Washington, DC 20415-0001

Dear Director Archuleta:

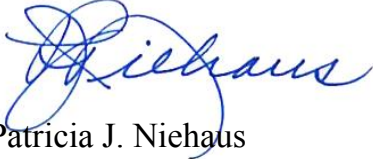
As an HR professional, FMA National President, and member of the Federal Employee Education and Assistance Fund's (FEEA) Board of Directors, I see the struggles and triumphs of federal employees on a daily basis. Whether it's feds strained financially by last summer's furloughs or proud parents about to send a child off to college, I view FEEA as an important resource for federal families facing life's financial challenges.

As a DoD employee I am familiar with the strong relationship between the military relief agencies and their respective branches of service. Although FEEA, as a CFC charity, may not be able to have the same type of close relationship with OPM, I think a more cordial, cooperative working relationship would be to the benefit of federal employees. OPM's concerns about remaining completely impartial with regard to CFC charities seem to have led instead to an adversarial relationship with FEEA, including failure to provide information about FEEA to feds during natural disasters when FEEA provides emergency financial help, and reprimands to individual agencies that choose to share such information themselves, even when outside the active CFC season.

I am also disturbed by recent developments barring some FEB members who are also members of Local Federal Coordinating Committees (LFCCs) from participating on FEEA's regional scholarship committees. This decision will cause FEEA to lose several long-time volunteers and complicates its ability to recruit new chairpeople in some areas. I am not aware that there has ever been a complaint regarding this volunteerism and know several of the parties in question have participated on the scholarship committees for over a decade without incident. As the committees meet outside the CFC season, and FEEA as a national CFC charity does not have its eligibility overseen by LFCCs, I am confused why this policy change is necessary. Are all LFCC members now barred from volunteering for any CFC charity, regardless of whether the volunteerism takes place during or outside of the campaign season? Does the prohibition include activities like Red Cross blood drives and the Feds Feed Families initiative? If not, it seems to me FEEA is being unfairly singled out with this punitive policy.

I look forward to speaking with you more about FEAA and finding a way forward that addresses OPM's neutrality concerns while fostering a better working relationship with the only non-profit devoted solely to assisting civilian federal and postal employees. I know there are many organizations and individuals who share my deep concerns. Please contact FMA's executive director, Todd Wells (twells@fedmanagers.org or 703-683-8700), should you have any questions or want to schedule a meeting. I will be in Washington the week of April 14 and would welcome the chance to briefly discuss this and other issues affecting federal managers. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,



Patricia J. Niehaus
FMA National President