

**MEMORANDUM****To: FMA Regional Directors****From: Greg Stanford and Katie Maddocks****Re: FMA Government Affairs Update for November 2015****Date: December 4, 2015**

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The purpose of this memorandum is to provide a brief narrative and status of ongoing government relations and public affairs activities the FMA government relations department worked on in November 2015 on behalf of FMA members. Please share this information with chapter presidents, legislative action team leaders and others in your region.

**Wounded Warriors Legislation Signed Into Law**

On Thursday, November 5, President Barack Obama signed into law the Wounded Warriors Federal Leave Act (P.L. 114-75). This FMA home-grown initiative will provide 104 hours of sick leave up front to first year federal employees who qualify under the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) as thirty percent or more disabled due to a service-related disability. The law, originally introduced by Representative Stephen Lynch (D-MA) and cosponsored by Representative Blake Farenthold (R-TX), provides necessary leave to attend medical appointments for service-related injuries without exhausting both sick and annual leave. Senators Jon Tester (D-MT) and Jerry Moran (R-KS) introduced similar legislation, which gained unanimous support in the Senate.

**National President's Visit to Washington, D.C.**

The FMA government affairs office scheduled and attended several productive meetings for President Niehaus with senior agency officials and staff from both the House and the Senate during the week of November 16:

- Representative Stephen Lynch (D-MA)
- Office of Senator Jon Tester (D-MT)
- Gwendolyn DeFilippi, Director, Civilian Senior Leader Management Office, Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army, Manpower and Reserve Affairs
- Andrew Jackson, Assistant Secretary for Management at the Department of Education
- Chris Mihm, Managing Director, Strategic Issues, Government Accountability Office

- House Oversight and Government Reform Committee Minority staff
- National Council on Federal Labor-Management Relations

### **VA hit list**

As noted in a previous government affairs update, the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), Local 17, detailed a list of managers and executives within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recommended for termination. The office of VA Secretary Bob McDonald has not confirmed if he requested this report, nor if he read it. In November, several managers and executives within the VA contacted FMA, expressing that they have been unfairly targeted by union members. In response, FMA and SEA wrote to Secretary McDonald on November 10, urging him to give the AFGE report little credence and not to make personnel decisions based off of the report.

### **TDY letters**

In November 2014, the Department of Defense (DOD) instituted reductions in temporary duty assignment (TDY) per diem allowances and lodging stipends in an effort to reduce departmental spending in a time of restricted budgets. Civilian employees on TDY between 30 and 180 days have seen their per diem and stipends reduced by 25 percent, and those over 180 days, face a 45 percent reduction. Because of these reductions, managers within DOD are seeing reductions in volunteers for TDY as upfront costs are the burden of the employee. House and Senate Appropriations Committees are currently examining spending levels that are in line with the Bipartisan Budget Act (P.L. 114-74). FMA, along with other federal workforce advocacy groups and travel industry associations, urged appropriators to restore the funding for TDY per diems and stipends.

### **FECA Reform**

Greg and Katie met with staff from Senator Susan Collins' office to express FMA's support of Sen. Collins' steadfast leadership on FECA reform provisions included in postal reform bill introduced in the U.S. Senate.

### **Region 3 Conference**

November 2015 saw the first FMA Region 3 held a conference since the association transitioned from zones to regions. Region 3 Director Pauline Coleman-Sutton presided over this successful event held in Corpus Christi, TX, and hosted by FMA Chapter 125 (Corpus Christi Army Depot). Chapter 125 President Joe Quintanilla ("Joe Q") did a great job assembling what he called a "mini version of FMA's national convention."



Director Coleman-Sutton provided some encouraging welcoming remarks, before turning it over to special guest, Mr. Kreston Cook, Deputy to the Commander of CCAD, for introduction of Representative Blake Farenthold (R-TX). Mr. Farenthold represents Corpus Christi and CCAD in his congressional district. Mr. Farenthold is also the lead Republican sponsor of FMA's initiative, the Wounded Warriors Federal Leave Act, which was signed into law the day before the Region 3 conference. Following his remarks, Mr. Farenthold made a presentation to a wounded warrior, Rafael Flores, of Combat Marine Outdoor.

Region 3 attendees were very generous in contributing to both FEEA and FMA PAC, and we appreciate your thoughtfulness.