



# DOES AI HAVE A ROLE IN FEDERAL PRODUCTIVITY MEASUREMENT?

: Fifty Years  
: of the  
: Environmental  
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: November  
: Elections  
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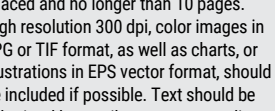
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From Our President...

## **ADVANCING FAIR PAY AND RETIREMENT LEGISLATION**

FMA Family,

I hope you are all doing well as the season turns from summer to fall. I had a great visit to Washington, D.C., September 9-12. Greg Stanford from the FMA National Office and I met with our congressional representatives on Capitol Hill discussing Fiscal Year 2025 appropriations and other FMA legislative priorities including, the Equal COLA Act, the Social Security Act, the Federal Retirement Fairness Act, repeal of the Government Pension Offset (GPO) and Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP), as well as telework in the federal sector. The issues are addressed in the Action Letter section of the FMA website at [fedmanagers.org](https://fedmanagers.org). Please visit the website and send action letters on these issues to your representatives. The process is simple and all you do is click on the link, add your information in the provided fields, hit the send button, and the letter will be sent to your representative in the House, as well as your two senators. Remember, do not send these action letters on your government phone or computer.

One of the biggest issues we continue to face within the federal sector is the hiring and retention of federal employees. In March 2024, President Biden proposed a 2 percent raise for feds in 2025. Frustratingly, we keep falling behind the private sector in pay, currently 27 ½ percent, and this number is growing every year, so the 2 percent raise will definitely not solve this problem.

On September 11, I attended the Samuel J. Heyman Service to America Medals Awards gala held at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in D.C. This event recognizes outstanding work performed by federal employees and attempts to improve public perceptions about the work of government. I was proud to attend with FMA Executive Director Todd Wells to honor the service to the nation of all the nominees and winners.

The Regions 1 & 2 Conference will be held October 18-19, in Jacksonville, Florida. The Regions 3 & 4 Conference will be held November 9-10, at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. These conferences are important as we handle region business as well as strategize for upcoming advocacy opportunities with our elected members of Congress. We hope your schedule will allow you to attend!

The National Office Staff and the National Executive Board will continue to advocate on behalf of all active and retired federal employees as we move through the election year. We continue to push elected representatives to use the legislative days remaining in the 118th Congress to invest in management in the federal workforce.

As always, thank you for your support of the men and women of our armed forces, your commands/agencies, your communities, FMA, and the United States of America. ●

Sincerely,

Craig Carter  
FMA National President

**COVER**

# **DOES AI HAVE A ROLE IN FEDERAL PRODUCTIVITY MEASUREMENT?**

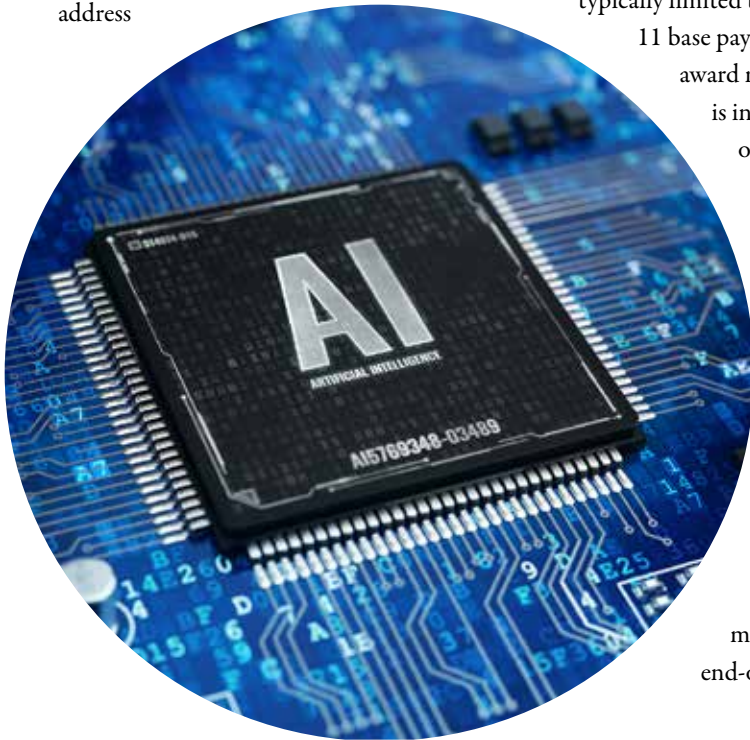




## By Tim E. Winchell

Private sector and federal managers have different priorities. Sustained profitability ultimately drives private sector operations while mission accomplishment within full-time equivalent (FTE) and budget authorizations is typically a federal manager's focus. This creates substantially different decision-making paradigms, the primary reason that 45 years of efforts to "reform" operations have proved to be of only limited success.<sup>1</sup> Like their private sector counterparts, federal managers play the hand they are dealt.

This article provides well-defined distinctions between federal and private sector management decision-making priorities, outlines the difficulty in defining what constitutes federal productivity as compared to the private sector, and reviews historic efforts to address



federal productivity measurement. It also synthesizes recommendations by the Government Accountability Office (formerly Government Accounting Office – GAO) in 2021 on how best to integrate AI into federal operations. The article concludes by addressing potential options and barriers for best utilizing AI to address long-standing barriers to federal productivity measurement. Selected footnotes and hyperlinks are available for readers who would like to do additional research.

## Federal Manager vs Private Sector Resource Reality

Federal managers receive FTE allocations and may be given labor budgets that are typically limited to Object Class (OC)

11 base pay, overtime, and incentive award monetary allocations.<sup>2</sup> It is in the agency comptroller's or controller's interest to maintain centralized control of FTE and OC 11 funds to ensure flexibility in reprogramming resources as needed to respond to senior leadership proposals and the inevitable need to reprogram resources as part of changing midyear, unfunded, and end-of-year budget priorities.

The incentive for federal managers is to ensure that FTE allocations and labor budgets are sufficient to execute their missions, while understanding that resource allocations often reflect political priorities as much or more than effective resource management. Federal managers are conditioned to maximize their available resources in anticipation of "fair share" downsizing cuts during times of austere budgets. Decades ago, Charles Levine referred to this as the "efficiency paradox" where those federal managers most able to absorb the cuts are those that have the most excess capacity available.<sup>3</sup>

Because the private sector has profit as a decision-making driver, private sector managers at all levels may see sustained profitability as a priority by ensuring that labor costs are competitive, either in terms of private sector markets or government contracts. Federal managers have mission accomplishment as their primary driver, and often see labor cost control as a comptroller priority.

## Defining Productivity

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) defines productivity as output/inputs.<sup>4</sup> This works in the private sector where short-term profit, long-term market focus, and the need for quality deliverables are prerequisites to remaining competitive in a global market, including when contracting with federal agencies.

As will be noted in the next section, federal government oversight agencies have struggled for decades in measuring agency productivity. Over the years, efforts have

1 These include 1980s New Public Management theory that advocated a more customer focused "businesslike" approach to government operations which, presaged the total quality and Gore reforms in the 1990s, and the President's Management Agenda during the President George W. Bush administration. In his last two State of the Union addresses, President Obama commented on the difficulties in changing federal agency management practices. Reform initiatives from OMB continued during the Trump Administration.

2 These fall into Object Class (OC) 11. Several agencies publish OC listings on the Internet. USDA publishes a detailed listing at Budget Object Classification Codes (BOC) ([usda.gov](https://www.usda.gov))

3 C.H. Levine, "More on Cutback Management: Hard Questions for Hard Times," *Public Administration Review*, vol. 39, No. 2, March/April 1979, pp. 179-83

4 What is Productivity? : U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics ([bls.gov](https://www.bls.gov))

been made to measure both output/input metrics, while often mentioning the need to include some measurement of quality of output. Studies have addressed quality primarily in terms of directly measurable standards, such as accuracy of mail delivery, acceptability of printing products, or other repetitive production-focused operations.

The public sector literature has evolved over the decades to also recognize, particularly at the federal level, that productivity measurement requires an extraordinarily complex assessment of how individual agency program performance impacts such larger issues as national and international “outcomes.”<sup>5</sup> How can the programs of the Departments of State, Defense, Commerce, Homeland Security, and the U.S. Agency for International Development, and so forth, be measured with quantitative and qualitative data to determine the cost-effectiveness of

.....

## “How can [national security] programs be measured with quantitative and qualitative data to determine cost-effectiveness?”

.....

interagency national security programs? The same quandaries exist in the areas of financial management, health, the social safety net, and others.

After reviewing multiple government and more academic historical analyses of federal productivity, this article will conclude by addressing what role AI may have in addressing the long-term dilemma of outcomes measurement.

## Historic Efforts to Address Federal Productivity Measurement

The post-WWII period was marked by multiple efforts to address the issue of productivity and its measurement in federal operations. The reality of federal productivity measurement is that it is easier to measure government output that results in a specific product than it is to measure the large percentage of federal missions involving the application of intellectual capital. The highlights of efforts to measure federal productivity include:

- In 1973,<sup>6</sup> GAO issued a study on productivity measurement using the Postal Service, Social Security, and the Bureau of Engraving and Printing as examples of measurable productivity. GAO concluded that even this data was best at indicating trends and was useful “...primarily as trend indicators and are not conclusive as to overall management or program performance. The numbers require considerable interpretation along with



5 See *Unlocking Public Value: A New Model for Achieving High Performance in Public Service Organizations*, Martin Cole and Greg Parston, (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2006), reviewed in the *Public Manager*, Vol. 36 No 4, Winter 2007-2008, p. 83-4. A former mentor Dr. Walter L. Balk of the University of Albany, New York, wrote extensively on productivity emphasizing the need to measure both efficiency of production and compliance with defined “standards.” See W.L. Balk, *Improving Government Productivity: Some Policy Perspectives*, (Beverly Hills, Calif., Sage Publications, 1975)

6 GAO 1973 Measuring and Enhancing Federal Productivity 12/1973 Measuring and Enhancing Federal Productivity (gao.gov)



other indicators of performance – especially those concerned with program results, effectiveness, and quality.”

- In 1974 GAO provided a detailed history of efforts to ensure financial accountability noting the establishment of the Joint Financial Management Improvement Program (JFMIP) in 1948. JFMIP continues today as an interagency program with its original membership (GAO, Treasury, and GSA). The Office of Personnel Management (OPM, then the U.S. Civil Service Commission – CSC) was added in 1966. JFMIP was established with “operating agencies to promote improved financial management on a governmentwide scale and in individual agencies.” JFMIP was given a statutory basis in the Budget and Accounting Procedures Act of 1950. JFMIP goal number 10 is to “strengthen agency capability and improve techniques for measuring and enhancing productivity.”<sup>7</sup>

- In 1975 GAO issued a report “Can Federal Productivity Be Measured?” This report noted that the JFMIP<sup>8</sup> found that the productivity of federal workers could be measured for 61 percent of federal operations and that “since not all employee output is susceptible to counting or readily measurable for productivity purposes, 100 percent of employee efforts probably never can be measured.” On page nine, it concluded, “It has been possible to measure many manufacturing, printing, maintenance, supply, and various administrative service activities. On the other hand, most research and development and general management functions are not readily measurable.”

- In 1979 GAO issued a report on Federal Productivity and Performance Appraisal systems<sup>9</sup> that summarized problems that have adversely impacted progress toward

approving federal productivity efforts including:

- No continuing focal point to lead federal productivity efforts.

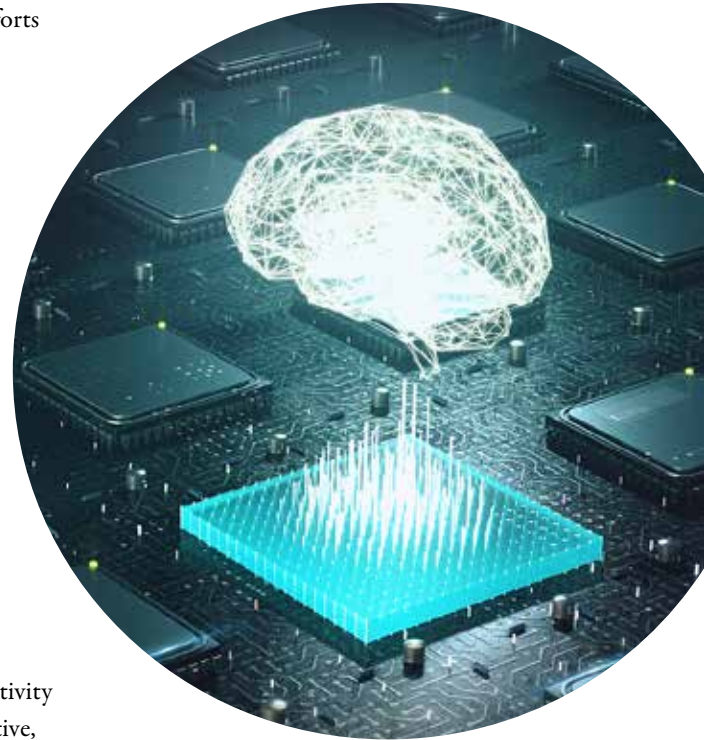
Responsibility for leading federal productivity initiatives had shifted between the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), JFMIP, the National Center for Productivity and Quality of Working Life, and OPM.

- A tendency toward rhetoric. It noted that the time for discussion was past, and more energy should be devoted to actively improving productivity.

- Barriers to improving productivity include: the absence of profit motive, diverse missions, lack of high-level interest, the budget process, absence of specific goals, and unnecessary regulations that erode managers’ ability to manage.

- Little effort aimed at developing, using, and refining performance measures, noting management resistance, but, concluding that active measurement of specific, definable goals and outputs, is possible in many cases.

- A 1985 BLS report on federal productivity noted distinct similarities and some fluctuations between federal and private sector productivity from 1967 through 1983 limiting its definition of productivity to: “The productivity indexes in this study are output per employee-year measures which show changes in the relationship between the output of the sample unit and the labor input associated with the production of the output. The output per employee-year index is derived by dividing the output index by the



employment index.”<sup>10</sup> Neither the issue of product quality or the complex issue of interagency impact on overall government or societal outcomes was addressed. In 1994 the Bureau of Labor Statistics discontinued providing productivity measurement of federal agencies (See McKenzie report cited in footnote xiii p. 5).

- Passed in 1993, the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA),<sup>11</sup> emphasizing planning and program assessment, was amended in 2010 as the Government Performance and Results Act Modernization Act.<sup>12</sup> As stated on their website, the 2010 modernization prioritized implementation of proven management practices: engaging senior managers; defining success through strategic planning and priority goal setting; focusing on a limited number of priority goals; regular, data-driven performance reviews that

7 The Joint Financial Management Improvement Program in the Federal Government (gao.gov). PDF file. JFMIP outlines its history at 1981 Joint Financial Management Improvement Program Report.pdf

8 Can Federal Productivity be Measured? The Comptroller General of the United States, 1975, Can Federal Productivity Be Measured? | U.S. GAO

9 Federal Productivity and Performance Appraisal Systems | U.S. GAO

10 Productivity trends in the Federal Government (bls.gov) Beginning of appendix, p.9

11 S.20 - 103rd Congress (1993-1994): Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 | Congress.gov | Library of Congress

12 Performance Framework | Performance.gov

*continued on next page*

“AI can overcome the dynamic and often ephemeral priorities of politically based strategic priorities and their resultant budgets. Addressing that reality may prove too hard.”

incorporate a broad range of qualitative and quantitative indicators and evidence; and strengthening agency management capabilities, collaboration, coordination, and knowledge for managing programs more effectively and efficiently.

- In 2006 McKinsey and Company issued a report “How Can American Government Meet Its Productivity Challenge?”<sup>13</sup>

It recommended to measure productivity again using transparent indicators of progress, to set ambitious national productivity targets aligned with those in the private sector, to create greater transparency in agency and program performance, to provide government managers with incentives to improve productivity, to build management capabilities through use of chief operating officers, and to boost OMB management function.

## The Complex Issue of Outcomes

In 2021 GAO issued *Artificial Intelligence: An Accountability Framework for Federal Agencies and Other Entities*.<sup>14</sup>

To paraphrase, it listed the following “Key Practices, Governance at the Organizational Level”: clear goals; well-defined roles, responsibilities, and delegated authorities “to



ensure effective operations, timely corrections, and sustained oversight;” commitment to values and principles that will foster public trust; hiring a workforce qualified to sustain AI; involve stakeholders; have AI-specific risk management plans; “establish and document specifications to ensure the AI system meets its intended purpose;” ensure AI systems are regulatory compliant; and promote transparency.

These key practices support AI adaptation regardless of the program area. It specifically provides the foundation to support evolving abilities to manage and effectively establish comprehensive metrics that analyze interagency metadata currently being reported to Congress, OMB, and various agency program echelons. Logically, the capability exists to aggregate interagency metadata within broad categories, such as national security, in terms of both the individual and combined contribution of each agency (outputs) against dedicated resources (inputs). In theory, and likely

<sup>13</sup> How can American Government meet its productivity challenge? (mckinsey.com)

<sup>14</sup> gao-2021-519sp report on use of AI.pdf

future reality, the contribution of each agency to overall “outcomes” can also be measured within defined metrics.

## Measuring Federal Productivity Using AI

The question becomes whether emerging, detailed metadata analysis available using AI can overcome the dynamic and often ephemeral priorities of politically based strategic priorities and their resultant budgets. Addressing that reality may prove too hard. Nonetheless, without metadata-

driven resource allocation metrics serving as a major contributor to budget decisions, federal supervisors, and mid-level managers, in particular, must pragmatically continue to prioritize addressing daily reality and fight for the financial and human resources tools in a manner that best accomplishes the mission. ●

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*Tim E. Winchell retired as a federal civilian in 2007. His career and later consulting work included multiple components of DOD, DHS, HHS, financial and international affairs agencies, the VA, and others. His articles and reviews have appeared in multiple journals. He has taught management and public administration at the graduate and undergraduate levels and is currently on the Board of Editors of a major public sector journal. He is President of Job Analytics, LLC.*



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**FEATURE**



# **FIFTY YEARS OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY**





## By Ben Neverov

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was created on December 2, 1970, by President Richard Nixon following growing concerns over environmental quality around the country. Today, the EPA has a permanent workforce of 17,000 employees, and an additional temporary workforce of about 1,500 employees. The EPA operates through ten regional offices across the country, all of whom have a variety of responsibilities overseeing several states and territories or special environmental programs.

## The Origin of the EPA

An emphasis on protecting the environment had not existed on a national scale in the United States until the 1960s. This movement was in part due to the publication of *Silent Spring*, a book by Rachel Carson which documented the damage being done to the environment by rampant pesticide use. A series of natural disasters across the country also added fuel to the fire of environmental activism, inspiring action from President Nixon. The President presented Congress with list of key points regarding environmental protection. These included funding requests for water treatment facilities, updating environmental health standards across the country, and stipulations surrounding the drilling, transportation, and sale of oil and gas. President Nixon worked in tandem with a council he created at the time to organize a response for the environment from the federal government.

It was at the recommendation of this

council that President Nixon proposed a plan to Congress for a new federal agency, which would combine a variety of the federal government's responsibilities into one federal agency, the EPA. The first administrator of the EPA, William Ruckelshaus, took up the position on December 4, 1970.

## Early Work of the EPA

Ruckelshaus spearheaded the EPA for three years, until 1973, when he accepted the position of Acting FBI Director. During his tenure, the EPA scored some major



accomplishments, including banning the dangerous pesticide DDT, establishing a variety of environmental and industrial standards, and creating an effective environmental law enforcement program – the first of its kind. Ruckelshaus is credited for many of the established environmental

protections of the current EPA.

One major victory for the EPA in the early years involved combating industrial spending by Congress on projects which would further jeopardize the environment. Following input from the EPA, President Nixon impounded \$9 billion from an \$18 billion congressional appropriation.

## Major Achievements of the EPA

According to the Aspen Institute, the EPA has made large strides towards guaranteeing environmental quality and health in the United States in its 50 years of operation. One of the core issues addressed by the

EPA was acid rain – a direct result of increasing atmospheric pollutants.

In response to growing levels of acidity in U.S. waterways, the EPA formed the Acid Rain Program with the goal of controlling atmospheric pollutants, specifically sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) and nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>), and promoting public health. This program allowed the EPA to provide states and industries with cost-effective methods for pollutant control.

The 1970s brought new research regarding the adverse health effects of lead in human bodies.

Because leaded gasoline was common at the time, the EPA took on the task of eliminating its use and introducing a multi-phase program for regulating lead in gas. The Aspen Institute reports that the removal of lead-based gas by the EPA resulted in an 89 percent decrease in the concentration of airborne lead from 1984 to 1995. The EPA reports that, following further monitoring,

*continued on next page*

the average concentration of airborne lead has further decreased 88 percent from 2010 to 2022, demonstrating continued success from even their earliest projects.

In addition to regulations placed on gas, the EPA also undertook the project of redefining emissions standards to further combat growing concerns regarding air pollution. This progression in the mid-1970s resulted in a mix of mandatory and voluntary changes made by car manufacturers as a means of reducing car emissions. EPA reports show that modern vehicle models operate with about 99 percent less emissions on average than vehicles in the 1970s.

The work regarding chemicals was not concluded with DDT and leaded gasoline however, and the EPA has continued to work to regulate the production and use of harmful chemicals across the country. Since the passing of the Toxic Substances Control Act in 1976, the EPA has taken steps to restrict the use of around 10 percent of chemicals prior to their manufacture. In addition to these active restrictions by the EPA, another 1,700 chemicals have been withdrawn prior to manufacture, often in response to potential action by the agency.

## The EPA Today

The EPA continues to strive to provide a cleaner environment for all Americans, and as a part of this goal the agency's Office of Environmental Justice has worked to recognize and address environmental risks faced by low-income communities. Through this office, the EPA has and continues to make efforts to revitalize the environment in low-income communities, further securing clean environments across the country, and preventing these communities from bearing

.....

**EPA reports show that modern vehicle models operate with about 99 percent less emissions on average than vehicles in the 1970s.**

.....

many of the consequences associated with environmental pollution.

A major component of this nationwide goal for environmental preservation was the Federal Water Pollution Control Act which was amended in 1972 and is now known as the Clean Water Act. Following a period where nearly two thirds of the country's bodies of water were unsafe for swimming or fishing, this legislation has allowed the EPA to make monumental positive changes to the overall water quality in the United States. While the work is not done, the EPA continues to operate through its multiple facets to promote innovation and enforce the law to ensure national water quality.

The EPA as we know it today has grown into an internationally renowned environmental regulation and preservation agency serving the best interests of the American people. The agency is able to effectively combine its elements of operation, in promoting scientific innovation, operating as an enforcement body for environmental regulation, and adopting a collaborative engagement style to pursue its original goals and newfound ones as they are developed. It is the Environmental Protection Agency's varied styles of approach that have encouraged widespread support and compliance from both industry and civil society in the United States.

We salute our many FMA members who work for the Environmental Protection Agency and thank them for their service to our country. ●



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*Ben Neverov was an intern at the FMA national office and is a student at William & Mary University.*



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

## Attend FMA's National Convention & Management Training Seminar

We are pleased to announce FMA's 87th National Convention and Management Training Seminar will be held March 23-26, 2025, in Alexandria, Virginia. We are excited to once again host a pre-convention reception at the FMA headquarters, just around the corner from the convention hotel. Old Town Alexandria offers restaurants and entertainment of many kinds, so think about bringing your friends and family and staying a few extra days.

We want your input into the planning and direction of our association. Also, the convention offers a great chance to get to know your fellow FMA members working across the federal government. As always, 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. FMA conventions are always a great experience. You'll find the most current information on the FMA website at: [www.fedmanagers.org/events](http://www.fedmanagers.org/events). Please join us!

## National Executive Board Elections

The positions of FMA National President, National Secretary, Region 2 Director, and Region 4 Director are up for election at the 2025 National Convention. All nominations must be submitted no later than January 27, 2025. Contact Executive Director Todd Wells at [twells@fedmanagers.org](mailto: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 his/her service? Work with your Chapter President to nominate them for an FMA award. Chapters should submit nominations for FMA's Manager of the Year Award and Gil Guidry Award to their respective Region Director no later than February 7, 2025. Each chapter may submit one nomination for each award. To learn more about these awards, and the nominating process, visit: [fedmanagers.org/awards](http://fedmanagers.org/awards). Region Directors' contact information may be found at: [fedmanagers.org/Contact-Us](http://fedmanagers.org/Contact-Us). Help us celebrate our outstanding federal manager members!

## Resolutions

FMA welcomes proposed resolutions from our members to identify matters 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 7, 2025. Forward resolutions to Greg Stanford, Director of Government Affairs, at [gstanford@fedmanagers.org](mailto:gstanford@fedmanagers.org).

## We Need Your Personal Email and Cell Phone Number

With more departments and agencies blocking or stripping FMA's emails prior to you receiving them, we are looking for alternative ways to successfully communicate with our members. In that effort, we are asking that every member provide us with his/her personal, non-government email address. If you have already provided this, then you do not need to do anything.

We are also collecting cell phone numbers so that in the future we may send you text message alerts regarding major events or requesting you send your elected representatives action letters in a timely manner.

To update your FMA profile, visit [www.fedmanagers.org](http://www.fedmanagers.org). At the top right of the page, click on "Login." Enter your Username and Password. Then click on your name to the left of the Login button, and then update your profile. You may also provide this information by emailing us at [info@fedmanagers.org](mailto:info@fedmanagers.org), or calling us at 703.683.8700.

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



# TO THE NOVEMBER 2024 ELECTIONS AND BEYOND





## By Greg Stanford

The November 2024 elections will be upon us shortly. It has been an eventful campaign season to this point. In the last few months, we have seen a failed assassination attempt on one candidate for president of the United States – and senseless loss of life of a supporter at the event – while the other candidate, the current U.S. president, withdrew from the race and was replaced at the top of the ticket.

As we near the pivotal date – Election Day is Tuesday, November 5 – we want to give a brief overview of the upcoming election, including policies affecting the workforce candidates are promoting, and a brief outlook and analysis on what the government may look like for the 119th Congress. Most importantly, we urge you to vote in November and make your voice heard. The currency of politics is the vote, and this is your opportunity to participate in “government of the people, by the people, for the people.”

At the outset, we want to reiterate that FMA is proudly non-partisan. We work with and support Republicans, Democrats, and Independents who advocate on behalf of issues and policies of interest to federal managers.

To illustrate that, I’d like to share a brief story about bipartisanship. In August 2024, I participated in a strategy meeting led by Representatives Garret Graves (R-LA) and Abigail Spanberger (D-VA), who are spearheading the effort to repeal the Government Pension Offset and the Windfall Elimination Provision. As you know, this is a longtime FMA issue brief, and we are closer to repeal being a reality than we have ever been. It was energizing to watch Reps. Graves and Spanberger work together; to hear how they spoke about each other and their respective staffs. The respect, collegiality and team spirit were a breath of fresh air. For the entire meeting I thought to myself how so many of their colleagues could learn something from their example.

Regrettably, neither of these members will be returning for the 119th Congress.

## U.S. President

The race for the White House is between former President Donald Trump and current Vice President Kamala Harris. You can view Mr. Trump’s platform at [www.donaldjtrump.com/platform](http://www.donaldjtrump.com/platform) and Ms. Harris’ agenda at [mailchi.mp/press.kamalaharris.com/vice-president-harris-lays-out-agenda-to-lower-costs-for-american-families](http://mailchi.mp/press.kamalaharris.com/vice-president-harris-lays-out-agenda-to-lower-costs-for-american-families).

## A Return of Schedule F?

An elephant in the room for the federal workforce is Schedule F. So, let’s talk about that first.

Former President Trump has made very clear, and is campaigning on a promise, that he will immediately reissue the Executive Order he issued late in his first term as president creating Schedule F. Unveiled in October 2020, Schedule F was a new class of federal employees – removing any career federal worker in a position deemed “confidential, policy-determining, policy-making, or policy-advocating” from the General Schedule to a new classification with virtually no civil service protections. Effectively, any federal employee reclassified to Schedule F would be an at-will political appointee. Numbers vary widely on how many employees Schedule F would impact. At present, there are approximately 4,000 political appointees in any given Administration. Schedule F would affect a minimum of 50,000 federal employees, with some estimating the number could be closer to one half of a million.

Full disclosure: FMA vehemently and fundamentally opposed the creation of Schedule F in October 2020, endorsed legislation to prevent any future administration from recreating it without Congressional approval, and supported President Biden’s Executive Order that rescinded Schedule F when he took office in January 2021. FMA also supports the new rules finalized by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) in 2024 clarifying and protecting the longstanding merit-based system governing our civil service. FMA commented in favor of the proposed



rule and the effort to reinforce and clarify important civil service protections for federal employees who may shift from the competitive service to the excepted service, or from one excepted service schedule to another.

FMA National President Craig Carter wrote, “A hallmark of America’s civil service

*continued on next page*

is the foundational, fundamental understanding that federal employees swear an oath to the U.S. Constitution and provide services to all Americans, regardless of political party. The federal government cannot function effectively without this nonpolitical civil service capable of preserving institutional memory and competence across administrations. Dating back to the Pendleton Act of 1883, which ended the spoils system, America's civil service has been governed by statutes and rules aimed at preserving a federal employee's right to due process, as protected by the Constitution. The result is the American people have a highly educated, professional civil service that can be counted on, without fail, to deliver crucial services, no matter what the politics of the day may bring.”

## Promoting Accountability and Streamlining Removal Procedures Consistent with Merit System Principles

If re-elected, we presume President Trump would also restore Executive Order 13839, Promoting Accountability and Streamlining Removal Procedures Consistent with Merit System Principles, which he issued in May 2018, and President Biden rescinded. FMA broadly supported Executive Order 13839 and has



a much more favorable impression about its potential return.

Specifically, that Executive Order called for removing poor performers in a straightforward process, tailoring penalties for misconduct based on facts and circumstances (not requiring progressive discipline); ability for supervisors to take into account an employee's past work record and disciplinary record; and, emphasis on effective use of the probationary period, among other tools for managers.

FMA strongly agrees that feds should be both rewarded and held accountable for performance and conduct. And this can and should be done while firmly standing on the shoulders of the due process and merit system. We were disappointed when the Biden Administration unilaterally rescinded this Executive Order.

## Vice President Harris

We recognize Vice President Harris has not been on the campaign trail as the Democratic presidential nominee for as long as former President Trump. However,

as a key principle of the current administration, we can speculate that she would continue many of the current administration's policies toward the federal workforce if she is elected in November. Among those are the Executive Orders discussed above related to both the potential return of Schedule F and opposition to the FMA-supported Executive Order promoting accountability and streamlining removal procedures.

As vice president, Harris led the White House Task Force on Worker Organizing and Empowerment, whose recommendations are credited with boosting dues-paying union membership by 20 percent. And as a U.S. Senator she voiced support for official time and concerns with the effort to fold OPM into the General Services Administration and the White House Executive Office of the President. While FMA typically stays neutral on issues related to official time, we opposed the effort that would have shifted OPM's duties elsewhere.

## Brief Election Overview

Breaking out the crystal ball or my old Magic 8-Ball, what is going to happen in November?

Shake, shake, shake.

“Reply hazy, try again.”

Shake, shake, shake.

The race for the 270 electoral votes needed to win the White House is neck and neck. According to the non-partisan Cook Political Report, at the time I submitted this article, the Harris/Walz ticket had 226 electoral votes slated as “Solid,” “Likely,” or “Lean,” while the Trump/Vance ticket had 219 electoral votes in those categories, with 93 electoral votes listed as “Toss Up.”

Real Clear Politics shows Trump with 219 electoral votes, Harris with 208, and 111 Toss Ups. This means, mathematically, both nominees currently have realistic paths forward.

**Every vote matters, no matter what state you live in. We cannot urge you enough to exercise your right to vote.** That said, the key battleground states which will play an outside role in the ultimate outcome of the election are:

State	Number of Electoral Votes at Stake
Arizona.....	11
Georgia.....	16
Michigan.....	15
Nevada.....	6
North Carolina.....	16
Pennsylvania.....	19
Wisconsin.....	10

Republicans have a slim majority in the House of Representatives in the 118th Congress, holding 220 seats while Democrats have 212 seats. There are three vacancies. How are things looking for the House in the 119th Congress, which gavel in on January 3, 2025?

The Cook Political Report evaluates all races for House seats based on the political makeup of each district, a comprehensive political environment, interviews with experts and each candidate’s strengths and weaknesses.

The magic number in the House is 218 – that’s how many seats a party needs to be in the majority. Although, as we’ve seen in the recent Congresses, it can be difficult to govern with a slim majority, as it often requires near unanimity to pass a rule or a bill. The Cook Political Report lists 210 Republican candidates in the Solid, Likely, or Lean categories, compared to 203 Democrats in those same categories, with 22 Toss-ups. Like the race for the White House, this means majority control of the House –

including who will be the Speaker, set the rules, and run the agenda – is up in the air.

There are currently 48 Democrats in the U.S. Senate, 49 Republicans, and 3 Independents (who effectively work with the Democrats), meaning Democrats currently control the chamber. While every seat is up for grabs in the House, only a third of the Senate will be voted on in November. According to Real Clear Polling, 47 Republican Senate seats are considered Safe or Not Up for election, compared to 39 Democratic Senators in those categories. Of the remaining 14 seats, seven are “Lean” or “Likely” for Democrats, while three are “Lean” or “Likely” for Republicans.

Based on this outlook, Real Clear Polling therefore projects 50 Senate seats for Republicans, 46 for Democrats, and 4 Toss-Ups. It takes 51 seats to hold the majority in the U.S. Senate. If the Senate is split 50/50, the vice president, who also serves as the President of the Senate, casts the deciding vote.

*continued on page 25*

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# CAPITAL INSIGHTS

On Wednesday, July 10, the U.S. Senate confirmed Anne Wagner as the third member of the Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA). She was approved by a vote of 55-37, and her confirmation restores FLRA's leadership.

The FLRA's mission is: Protecting rights and facilitating stable relationships among federal agencies, labor organizations, and employees while advancing an effective and efficient government through the administration of the Federal Service Labor-Management Relations Statute.

The FLRA oversees labor-management relations at federal agencies and is comprised of a three-member board that settles unfair labor practice complaints and disputes between unions and management. However, the FLRA has only had two confirmed members since January of 2023, leaving it unable to rule on controversial cases requiring a tie-breaking vote. ●

The effort to repeal the Government Pension Offset and the Windfall Elimination Provision (GPO/WEP) – an FMA issue brief – continues to be a major issue in the 118th Congress. FMA supports the Social Security Fairness Act (H.R. 82/ S. 597), legislation that would repeal both provisions. Reps. Garret Graves (R-LA) and Abigail Spanberger (D-VA) are the lead sponsors of the House bill, while Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) introduced the Senate version. Neither Reps. Graves nor Spanberger will return to Washington, D.C., in the 119th Congress.

H.R. 82 now has 323 cosponsors and is the second-most cosponsored bill in the 118th Congress. S. 597 now has 59 cosponsors. Legislators are continuing to work to find ways to lower the cost for this overdue repeal. ●

The Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCO) Council released its annual report to Congress covering 2023. Created in 2003, the CHCO Council is the “principal interagency forum to advise and coordinate the activities of the agencies of its members on such matters as modernization of human resources systems, improved quality of human resources information, and legislation affecting human resources operations and organizations.”

The annual report details the CHCO Council's efforts during 2023, working on priorities including the Future of the Workforce, Elevating Human Resources, Human Capital Data, Employee Engagement, and Recruitment and Outreach. The council met to discuss topics such as IT special pay rates, program evaluation, work environment, FEVS results, and more. ●

Legislation introduced in July 2024 would formally remove a hiring barrier for prospective federal employees who have past marijuana use. In 2021, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) issued guidance that said past marijuana use would not automatically or solely disqualify applicants to the federal workforce. The Dismantling Outdated Obstacles and Barriers to Individual Employment (DOOBIE) Act (S. 4711), introduced by Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee Chairman Gary Peters (D-MI), would codify OPM's 2021 guidance.

Marijuana is currently legal for recreational use in 24 states, but remains a controlled substance under federal law.

In a statement upon introduction, Peters wrote, “As we work to build a highly skilled federal workforce, it's crucial that the federal government modernizes its hiring practices to reflect evolving laws and societal norms. My bill will take the commonsense step to align federal statutes with existing agency guidance and ensure that talented individuals are not automatically disqualified from service solely due to past marijuana use. By providing this much-needed clarity for agencies and applicants, we will ensure that the federal government can recruit and retain the best and brightest to serve our nation.” ●

These numbers currently give Republicans a slight advantage to have majority control in the 119th Congress. The majority party is able to set the agenda in that chamber, confirm or reject agency heads and judicial nominees, hold hearings, and conduct oversight of administration policy.

No matter who controls the House of the Representatives, the U.S. Senate, and the White House, FMA will work with them in a conversational manner to advocate on behalf of federal managers. Be sure to get to the ballot box in November!

## Recognition

Several FMA champions, decision makers who have been great friends of the federal workforce and to FMA are retiring at the end of the 118th Congress. Representative Derek Kilmer (D-WA), in particular, has worked tirelessly on behalf of Puget Sound Naval Shipyard and federal employees across

the country. We recognize his bipartisan efforts and achievements, and he will be sorely missed in Washington, D.C. On behalf of FMA, thank you, Representative Kilmer, for all of your work.

We are also grateful for Reps. Spanberger and Graves, noted earlier in this article. Best wishes for every success in the future. Among those leaving service in the U.S. Senate, we would also like to recognize Sen. Ben Cardin (D-MD), Sen. Tom Carper (D-DE), Sen. Kyrsten Sinema (I-AZ), and Sen. Mitt Romney (R-UT) for your years of service to America and our federal managers. ●

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



## 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](http://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](mailto:gstanford@fedmanagers.org), or call 703.683.8700.



# MEET YOUR LEGISLATORS



## SENATOR TOM COTTON (R-Arkansas)

Tom Cotton is the junior U.S. Senator from Arkansas. He has served in this capacity since 2015. Cotton sits on several influential committees that directly impact FMA and our legislative priorities. He sits on the Senate Armed Services Committee where he is the Ranking Member of the Air Land Power Subcommittee. He also serves on the Judiciary Committee, with a leadership role as Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Criminal Justice and Counterterrorism. Cotton also serves on both the Intelligence and Joint Economic Committees.

Prior to his election to the Senate, Cotton served one term in the U.S. House of Representatives from Arkansas' 4th District, which includes towns such as Hope, Hot Springs, and Texarkana. He served nearly five years of active duty in the United States Army, including combat tours in Iraq and Afghanistan and with The Old Guard at Arlington National Cemetery. He also worked in a private law practice and as a management consultant with McKinsey & Co.

Cotton grew up in Yell County, Arkansas, and is a graduate of Harvard University and Harvard Law School. Following his law school graduation, he served one year as a law clerk for Judge Jerry Edwin Smith on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit.

He and his wife Anna have two sons. ●

### THE FACTS:

**Birthplace:** Dardanelle, Arkansas

**Born:** May 13, 1977

**Education:** Harvard University, B.A., 1998;  
Claremont Graduate University, Attended 1998-99;  
Harvard University, J.D., 2002

**Career:**

- U.S. Senate, Arkansas (2015-Present)
- U.S. House of Representatives, Arkansas, 4th District (2013-2015)
- Lawyer
- Management Consultant
- U.S. Army (2004-2009)

**Elected:** 2020 (2nd term)

**Committees:**

- Senate Armed Services
  - Airland
  - Emerging Threats and Capabilities
  - Strategic Forces
- Senate Judiciary
  - Competition Policy, Antitrust, and Consumer Rights
  - Criminal Justice and Counterterrorism
  - Immigration, Citizenship, and Border Safety
  - Intellectual Property
- Senate Select Intelligence
- Joint Economic

**Contact Information:**

U.S. Senate  
326 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510  
Phone: 202.224.2353  
Website: <http://cotton.senate.gov>



## SENATOR RAPHAEL WARNOCK (D-Georgia)



Reverend Raphael Warnock serves as the junior U.S. Senator from Georgia, a position he was first elected to in a special runoff election in 2021. He was reelected to his first full term in 2022. He is an American Baptist pastor and has served as senior pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta since 2005.

Warnock sits on the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee, the Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee, and the Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee, as well as the Special Committee on Aging. As a Senator from Georgia, he represents many FMA members at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, Chapter 322), Atlanta; Marine Corps Logistics Base (Chapter 101), Albany, Georgia; Warner Robins Air Logistics Center (Chapter 121), Robins Air Force Base; Internal Revenue Service (Chapter 214), Atlanta; Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay (Chapter 258), Kings Bay, as well as many FMA members-at-large.

Among FMA's legislative priorities, Senator Warnock is a cosponsor of the Social Security Fairness Act (S. 597), legislation that would repeal the Government Pension Offset (GPO) and Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP). He is also a cosponsor of the READINESS Act (S. 3530), a bill aimed at retaining federal employees who are spouses of a member of the Armed Forces or the Foreign Service when relocating due to an involuntary transfer.

A graduate of Morehouse College, Pastor Warnock received a Ph.D. in Systematic Theology from Union Theological Seminary. He was formerly the senior pastor at Douglas Memorial Community Church in Baltimore, Maryland.

Warnock grew up in Kayton Homes public housing in Savannah, Georgia, the eleventh of twelve siblings. He is divorced and has two children. ●

### THE FACTS:

**Birthplace:** Savannah, Georgia

**Born:** July 23, 1969

**Education:** Morehouse College, B.A., 1991; Union Theological Seminary, M.Div., 1994, M. Phil., 2006, Ph.D., 2006

**Career:**

- U.S. Senate, Georgia (2021-Present)
- Senior Pastor, Ebenezer Baptist Church (2005-Present)
- Senior Pastor, Douglas Memorial Community Church (2001-2005)

**Elected:** 2022 (1st full term)

**Committees:**

- Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
  - Commodities, Risk Management, and Trade
  - Conservation, Climate, Forestry, and Natural Resources
- Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs
  - Financial Institutions and Consumer Protection
  - Housing, Transportation, and Community Development
- Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation
  - Aviation Safety, Operations, and Innovation
  - Oceans, Fisheries, Climate Change, and Manufacturing
  - Surface Transportation, Maritime, Freight, and Ports

**Contact Information:**

416 Russell Senate Office Building

Washington, DC 20510

Phone: 202.224.3643

Website: <http://warnock.senate.gov>



## GAVIN SHEETS WINS FMA-FEEA SCHOLARSHIP!

Each year, FMA joins forces with the Federal Employee Education & Assistance Fund (FEEA), FMA's official charity, to offer FMA members, and their families, a chance to win merit-based scholarships. We are very pleased to announce Gavin Sheets as this year's FMA Scholarship winner!

Gavin is a freshman at Utah Valley University. He told us he was a three-sport varsity athlete in high school playing basketball, baseball, and golf. He was also involved in the Associated Student Board as a senior senator. He has many hobbies,

but his favorites throughout summer have been hiking, cliff jumping, playing golf, and hanging out with friends and family.

Gavin's father is Vincent Sheets, an assistant project superintendent with the Aircraft Carrier Platform at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard and Intermediate Maintenance Facility (PSNS & IMF). Vincent is a proud member of FMA Chapter 14, Puget Sound Naval Shipyard, Bremerton, Washington.

In five years, armed with a bachelor's degree in engineering, Gavin aspires to secure

a challenging role in a forward-thinking engineering firm. He stated, "My goal is to contribute innovative solutions, apply my acquired knowledge, and progressively advance into a position where I can lead impactful projects, fostering both personal and professional growth."

FMA is happy to assist Gavin in his educational career and wishes him all the best! If you or a family member are interested in applying for a scholarship, please visit <https://www.fedmanagers.org/Scholarships>.



*Following is Gavin's winning essay, with the prompt question presented below.*

**Describe a significant personal experience, positive or negative, that you have had with technology, such as social media, cell phones, gaming, or screen time. Based on this experience and your observations of others' experiences, do you think, overall, this kind of technology is an advantage or disadvantage in a young person's life?**

Gaming, often brushed aside as a mere recreational activity, has evolved into a dynamic force that profoundly impacts the high school experience, providing a myriad of positive effects on individuals. As a high school student immersed in both academics and sports, I've discovered firsthand the cognitive, social, and emotional benefits that gaming can bring to our lives.

Cognitively, gaming acts as a mental workout that extends beyond the controller, sharpening strategic thinking, problem-

solving, and decision-making skills. The complexities of virtual scenarios mirror the challenges we face in our studies, offering a unique avenue for intellectual stimulation. In terms of social interactions, gaming transcends the stereotypical image of solitary players. Engaging in online multiplayer games creates a vibrant community where friendships flourish. Whether teaming up with fellow enthusiasts or collaborating with players worldwide, the shared challenges and victories foster a sense of camaraderie, providing a vital connection in a world where face-to-face interactions can be scarce. High school, with its demanding academics and the intricate dance of managing responsibilities, can be overwhelming. Gaming serves as a therapeutic escape, offering a brief respite from the chaos of the real world. The immersive world of games allows me to unwind and destress. The sense of accomplishment within the gaming realm contributes to boosted self-esteem, instilling a resilience that helps navigate the tangible challenges outside the gaming environment.

Beyond its mental and social benefits, gaming has proven instrumental in skill development, a valuable asset for any individual navigating the complexities of high school life. The skills required to navigate the virtual landscape – resource management, time coordination, and strategic planning – are directly transferable to the daily balancing act of academic and extracurricular pursuits. The ever-evolving nature of the gaming



industry further nurtures adaptability and technological literacy, essential qualities for a well-rounded individual. However, moderation is key. Acknowledging the positive impact of gaming also requires a keen awareness of its potential pitfalls. For someone juggling academics and extracurriculars, finding that equilibrium is crucial to ensure that gaming remains a rejuvenating supplement rather than a hindrance to overall well-being.

In conclusion, gaming has become an integral and personalized aspect of the high school journey, offering a transformative experience for individuals navigating the demanding landscape of academics and extracurricular pursuits. From cognitive challenges that sharpen mental acuity to social connections that bridge distances, gaming serves as a multifaceted tool that shapes and enriches the lives of those seeking balance in the midst of high school's demands. ●



**DID YOU KNOW?**

# **DEI TRAINING CAN BENEFIT YOUR COMPANY CULTURE**



By Dr. Aikyna Finch

In today's business landscape, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) training has become vital. DEI training is necessary for creating an organizational culture that cherishes diversity, endorses equity, and ensures an inclusive atmosphere for everyone.

DEI training is a continuous educational journey and requires steadfast dedication to lifelong learning and critical self-reflection. It is not a one-time experience, but an evolving strategy crucial to building a culture that is genuinely appreciative of the full spectrum of human diversity.

## What Is Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion?

The three principles of DEI are integral to cultivating a thriving organization. Each one is necessary to create and maintain a positive company culture.

- **Diversity** is the collective mixture of different cultures within an organization. It encompasses the spectrum of employees' cultural backgrounds, life experiences, and inherent characteristics. These characteristics include race, gender, age, religion, disability status, sexual orientation, educational background, and cognitive diversity.
- **Equity** involves strategic approaches that ensure fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all employees while simultaneously identifying and eliminating barriers that prevent the full participation of select groups. The principle of equity acknowledges individuals' unique challenges and obstacles. Paying attention to equality also means that resources are allocated and opportunities are created to achieve equal outcomes for everyone.
- **Inclusion** concerns an active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity. Inclusion encompasses courses, student organizations, communities, and all the

ways people might connect with each other (intellectual, social, cultural, and geographical). Inclusion involves the awareness of disadvantaged groups and an empathic understanding of the complex ways individuals interact within systems and institutions.

## What Is DEI Training?

So, what is DEI training and how does it translate into tangible benefits for your company? DEI training is much more than raising awareness; it's a profound educational effort to equip employees with the knowledge needed to cultivate an inclusive workplace. This effort involves tackling unconscious bias, enhancing cultural competency, and improving communication through various interactive, engaging formats.

For those organizations focused on nurturing a dynamic and agile culture, effective DEI training serves as a catalyst for profound change. It equips both leaders and staff with the tools to establish clear objectives, track advancements, and refine tactics to meet the shifting landscapes of both the workforce and societal norms.

This dedication steers a business towards an environment enriched by inclusivity and innovation. By prioritizing DEI training, companies not only uphold commendable values, but also set the stage for reaping various advantages that contribute to sustained growth and viability.

The practical gains of DEI training can be substantial for any business. A few of the benefits include:

- **Enhanced employee engagement:** DEI training fosters a sense of belonging, with employees feeling valued and respected by peers and leaders. In turn, this may lead to lower employee turnover and higher productivity.
- **Fostering innovation:** By welcoming diverse teams and perspectives, DEI training paves the way for innovation and creative



problem solving.

- **Improved decision-making:** An inclusive approach to decision-making yields more informed and equitable outcomes to business problems.
- **Attracting talent:** A strong DEI program signals a commitment to progressive values, attracting top talent from diverse backgrounds.

## Building a Culture of Inclusion

As workplaces evolve, DEI training must keep pace with that evolution. This requires a flexible, data-informed approach to every aspect of business operations, from hiring to performance reviews. DEI training should also be customized to align with an organization's unique culture, setting, and requirements.

A genuinely inclusive culture is built through:

- **Leadership advocacy:** Leaders must be visibly committed to DEI principles because they set the tone for an organization.
- **Ongoing feedback:** DEI trainers

*continued on next page*

# DID YOU KNOW?

should regularly gather and act on employee feedback from regular surveys, focus groups, and employee resource groups.

- **Continuous learning:** Companies should provide ongoing opportunities for DEI education to equip employees with the latest tools and resources for inclusive practices.
- **Recognition:** People who champion inclusivity and actively promote diverse perspectives should be both acknowledged and celebrated.
- **Data-driven strategies** use metrics such as demographic representation, employee retention rates, and engagement surveys to track progress and make informed adjustments.

Remember that resistance to DEI training often arises from a misunderstanding of the value of DEI. Clear communication about the goals and expected outcomes of DEI training is essential, and DEI trainers should

ensure the training resonates personally with everyone. By investing in DEI training and nurturing a culture of continuous learning and action, an organization can truly be transformed.

## DEI Training Can Help an Organization Reach Its Fullest Potential

DEI extends beyond mere policy adherence; it is the foundation for creating a workplace where every team member can actively participate and contribute to their fullest potential. For HR leaders, DEI

training represents a pivotal moment to guide your company toward a vibrant and inclusive future. ●

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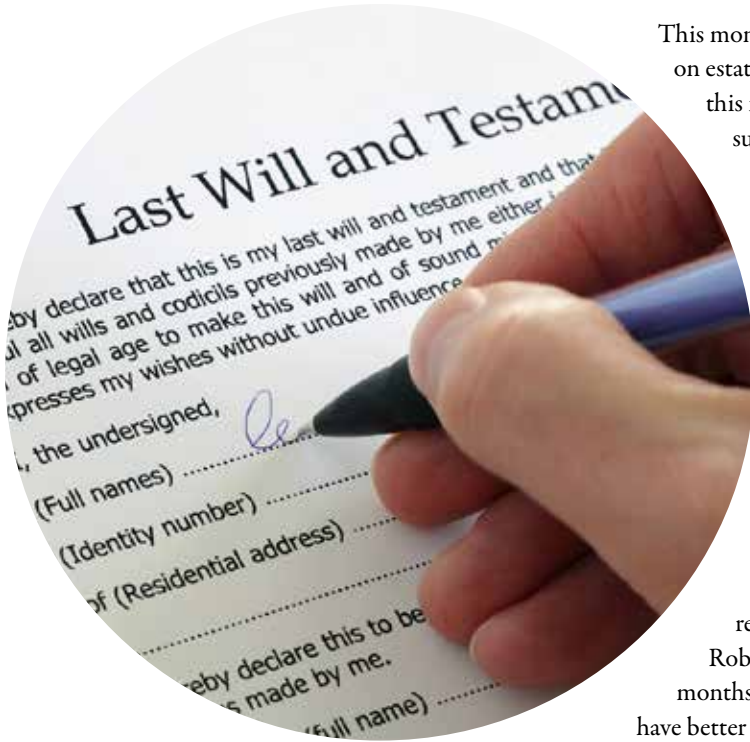


# RETIREE MATTERS

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, at FMA Headquarters if you have any questions or concerns.

*continued on next page*



This month, I would like to focus on estate planning. For some, this is a very uncomfortable subject, but I urge you to take the plunge and talk to your heirs about your end-of-life plans for finances, health decisions, and who will inherit what you have worked so hard to earn throughout your life and career. Estate planning has become personal and important to me recently, as my husband, Robbie, and I realized a few months ago that we need to have better plans in place for our eventual death, or for a time in the future when we may be unable to make decisions

related to our finances, health care, and other important life issues.

## What Is Estate Planning?

Estate planning refers to the preparation of tasks that manage an individual's financial situation in the event of their incapacitation or death. This planning includes the bequest of assets to heirs and the settlement of estate taxes and debts, along with other considerations such as the guardianship of minor children and pets. Most estate plans are set up with the help of an attorney experienced in estate law. Some of the steps include listing assets and debts, reviewing accounts, and writing a will.



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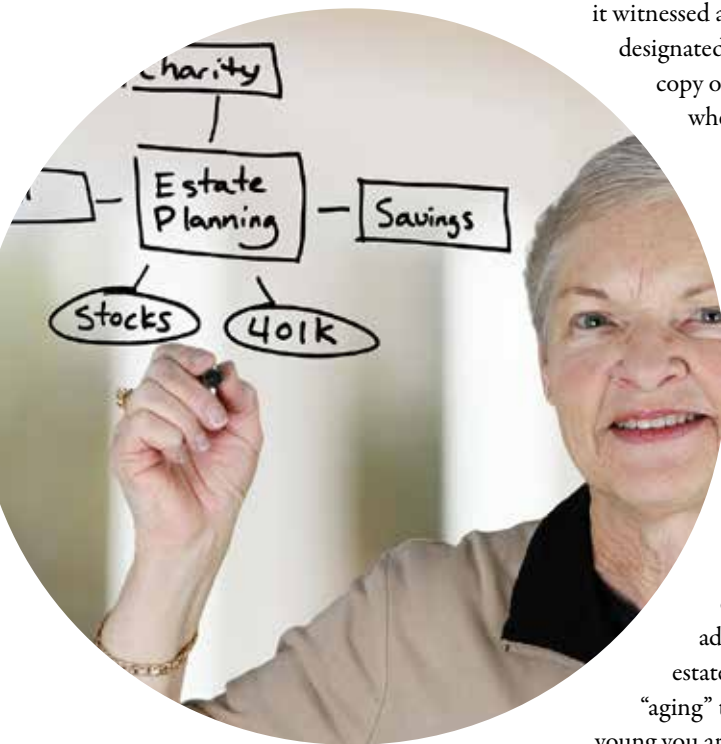
TASK	CONSIDERATION
Make a list of all your assets.	Be sure to include any physical assets like real estate and sentimental items along with all bank accounts, insurance policies, and annuities.
Make a list of all your debts.	This list should include everything you owe, including any loans.
Make copies of these lists.	If you have multiple beneficiaries, it helps to make multiple copies for each beneficiary to have at his or her disposal.
Review your retirement accounts.	This is important, especially for accounts that have beneficiaries attached to them. Remember, any accounts with a beneficiary pass directly to them.
Review your insurance and annuities.	Make sure your beneficiary information is up-to-date and all of your other information is accurate.
Set up joint accounts or transfer of death designations.	Joint accounts, such as checking and savings accounts, do not have to go through the probate process as long as there is a right of survivorship. This means the account moves directly from the deceased to the surviving owner. A transfer of death designation allows you to name an individual who can take over the account after you die without probate.
Choose your estate administrator.	This individual is responsible for taking care of your financial matters after you die. Your spouse may not be the right person as they may not be in the right emotional space to take over your finances.
Write your will.	Wills not only unravel any financial uncertainty, but they can also lay out plans for your minor children and pets, and you can also instruct your estate to make charitable donations with the funds you leave behind.
Review your documents.	Make sure you look over everything every couple of years and make changes whenever you see fit.
Send a copy of your will to your administrator.	This ensures there is no second-guessing that a will exists or that it gets lost. Send one to the person who will assume responsibility for your affairs after you die and keep another copy in a secure location.
See a financial professional.	This may be an estate planner or a financial planner who can help you review your accounts and help you make decisions to optimize your earnings.
Consider consolidating your accounts.	It may be a good idea to move as many of your assets as you can into one account. Doing so may help clear up any potential confusion in the future for you and for your heirs.
Complete other financial documents.	You may need other legal and financial documents as you get older. Consider a power of attorney (POA) for health and finances, living wills, and letters of instruction that provide direction for your funeral or what to do with other assets, such as a digital wallet.
Consider other savings.	There are tax-advantaged investment vehicles you can take advantage of to help you and others, including 529 college savings plans for your grandchildren.

*continued on next page*



## Key Takeaways

- Estate planning tasks include making a will, setting up trusts, making charitable donations to limit estate taxes, naming an executor and beneficiaries, and setting up funeral arrangements.
- A will gives instructions about property and custody of minor children.
- Various strategies can be used to limit taxes on an estate, from creating trusts to making charitable donations.
- Estate planning can and should be used by everyone—not just the ultra-wealthy.



On page 35 is a list to get you started for estate planning. Investopedia has a link that will take you to more detailed explanations of each item on the list: <https://www.investopedia.com/articles/retirement/10/estate-planning-checklist.asp>.

Robbie and I were very surprised at how much we had in “assets” when we fulfilled this list!

When you have gathered your information in one place, do your research and retain an attorney that specializes in estate planning. While this is not a cheap endeavor, it is well worth the investment. Any good attorney will sit with you to determine your desires and goals and then give you an estimate for his or her services. If you simply cannot afford the cost of the attorney, create a binder or box of documents to organize your records. At the very least, you need a last will and testament, powers of attorney for health care, and a living will or advanced health care directive. Choose the person you want to execute your wishes. Put this in writing, and have it witnessed and notarized. Make sure your designated executor or executrix has a copy of the documents and knows where the originals are located.

What happens if you don’t have any of the above documents? The short answer is you will leave stress and burdens on your surviving heirs. Even if you don’t think you have anything of value to leave behind, the details of your estate, regardless of its size, will be more complicated for your loved ones.

The National Council on Aging (NCOA) has great advice and guidelines on wills and estate planning. Don’t let the word “aging” throw you off – no matter how young you are or feel, you need planning documents for your end of life.

Here is a link to the NCOA information: [www.ncoa.org/adviser/estate-planning/last-will-and-testament/#:~:text=How%20to%20create%20a%20last%20will%20and%20testament,Maintain%20and%20update%20the%20document%20as%20needed%20](http://www.ncoa.org/adviser/estate-planning/last-will-and-testament/#:~:text=How%20to%20create%20a%20last%20will%20and%20testament,Maintain%20and%20update%20the%20document%20as%20needed%20)

If you do not have a will, don’t assume your spouse or children will automatically inherit everything. Even if that is true, in the absence of a will, the courts will appoint

a court administrator to settle your affairs, which can eat up to 10 percent of your estate’s value. It also means your property may be tied up in court much longer – up to three years in some cases. Also note, every state has different laws and processes, so be sure to do your homework either through personal research or by hiring an attorney. I am personally experiencing this from an uncle’s estate, and it is not pleasant. ●

## Make Your Voice Heard!

As a retiree, use your freedom 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 Representatives 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](http://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](mailto:FMA121Parker@gmail.com). ●

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*Christine Parker is FMA’s Retiree Conference Chair and National Treasurer.*



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