



www.few.org



455 Massachusetts Ave. NW, P.O. Box 306
Washington, DC 20001
Phone: 202/898-0994
Fax: 202/898-1535

***This information may be provided to
FEW membership via government email***

FEW Washington Update September 1-15, 2019

Congress Returned from Recess - on Monday, September 9, 2019!

In Congress:

The White House plan to close down the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is still on hold. Plans to shift many of its functions to the General Services Administration (GSA) — the Defense Department will handle security clearances — is proceeding but not a done deal. In June it was reported that furloughs without pay could potentially start October 1 for many OPM staffers, followed by layoffs, if Congress blocks the plan.

FEW Washington Update – September 1-15, 2019 FEW in Action

Equal Pay Webinar: Advocating for Dollars and Not Small Change

FEW provided a webinar, hosted Tonya Saunders, the Lobbying Representative last month about Equal Pay, the achievements, and struggles surrounding the issue. FEW advocates for dollars and not small change. Over the years, there has been “band-aid” legislation that have attempted to address the problem but not completely solve it. The webinar put the power in the participants hands to encourage FEW’s members to reach out to their elected officials. We would like to thank all who attended and hope that everyone found the information provided helpful.

Call to Action

FEW asks all members to write, tweet, call, and/or visit to your Senators about the pending legislation on Equal Pay and FEPLA. You can write to your representatives using [ENGAGE](#).

Feel free to contact the congressionalrelationsvp@few.org, or tsaunders@washingtonpremiergroup.net, if you have any questions.

FEW Washington Update – September 1-15, 2019 Tier I

ERA:

The ERA Coalition is still circulating a letter encouraging Congress to move forward with a markup and vote on H.J. Res 38, Rep. Jackie Spier's bill to remove the deadline.

There is an upcoming special performance at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC to be held on September 18th, titled "What the Constitution Means to Me". Fresh off of a huge Broadway run, the Tony nominated play that Justices Ginsburg and Sotomayor have raved about will have a ten-day run in DC. Heidi Schreck, the playwright and actor has just joined the ERA Coalition board. The play brilliantly telegraphs what women's lives would be like if there were an ERA. Tickets for the play and VIP reception can be purchased now. Check listings at the Kennedy Center.

Federal Employee Paid Leave Act (FEPLA):

As reported before the congressional recess, the House included the Federal Employee Paid Leave Act (FEPLA) has been incorporated into H.R. 2500, the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2020 (FY20). The Senate however, passed its defense authorization bill, which did not include a paid leave provision, on June 27, 2019.

FEPLA would provide 12 weeks of paid parental leave in connection with the birth, adoption or foster placement of a new child; allow for up to 12 weeks of paid family leave to care for an immediate family member with a serious medical condition; provide employees with 12 weeks of leave if they are unable to work due to a serious medical condition; and provide up to 12 weeks of leave for other purposes that qualify for unpaid leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), including for certain military caregiving and leave purposes.

Discussions between the House and Senate over the various provisions in the National Defense Authorization Act were reported to have started in August, and it is now estimated that a conference report will be finalized by October 1.

FEW Washington Update – September 1-15, 2019 Tier II

Budget/Appropriations Resume:

Despite the budget law signed by the president, the Congress as per usual, won't finish its appropriations work in time for the October 1, 2020, fiscal year. At least 12 major appropriations are likely to wind up as part of a continuing resolution that Congress must pass, and the president sign, to avoid another shutdown.

There is a bi-bipartisan bill that was introduced by Senators Lankford, Hasan and Johnson to address government shutdowns — the Government Shutdown Accountability Act. Several provisions of the proposed legislation are aimed at reducing or eliminating the end-of-fiscal-year problem.

The Government Shutdown Accountability Act ends government shutdowns by forcing Congress to fund the government: it cannot take a break (go on recess), members can't use taxpayer dollars to travel, and with few exceptions the House and Senate can only vote on spending bills. As amended by the committee, when a lapse in appropriations occurs, the government would remain open at current funding levels and members would not receive pay while Congress works to pass a spending bill (See [bill here](#)).

Federal Workers Pay Increase:

The January 1, 2020, pay raise for white collar, non-postal federal workers was announced recently. President Donald Trump changed course by proposing civilian federal employees get an across-the-board pay raise of 2.6 percent while locality pay rates remain frozen at 2019 levels. The White House previously wanted a pay freeze and a new system that will better reward high-achievers. The House has passed a 3.1 percent raise with the Senate yet to act. If the Senate accepts the House plan, and the president agrees to sign it, that would be the largest pay hike in years. But there are miles to go before this becomes a reality.

With a month to go in the cost of living adjustment countdown, federal, military and Social Security retirees are on track for a modest COLA in January. The increase, if any, will be based on the rise of the consumer prices index-W from this quarter (July, August, September) over the third quarter of last year. Right now, the COLA could be worth 1.6 percent but that could change. The final number won't be known until mid-October.

FEW Washington Update – September 1-15, 2019 Tier III

State Paid Family Leave:

The National Partnership recently updated their chart listing the key provisions of state paid family and medical leave laws to reflect the signing of the recent Oregon law and the expansion in California. The new chart can be found [here](#).

FEW Washington Update – September 1-15, 2019 General Interest

Military – Department of Defense:

The Defense Department on September 1 abruptly suspended its Employee Assistance Program (EAP), which offers referrals for hundreds of thousands in the civilian workforce for health care, mental health counseling, legal matters and other support services. And while officials say there's an agreement in place to resume the service, it's not clear when it will start up again.

The suspension of the program went mostly under the radar, with no public announcement from the DoD, although at least one DoD agency advised its staff that they should call 911 in an emergency while the suspension is in effect.

In a posted statement on its website, the Defense Logistics Agency said EAP services provided by Federal Occupational Health (FOH), an agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "were unexpectedly suspended as of September 1, 2019, while DoD is implementing new contracting mechanisms."

"DoD is working to rectify the situation and allow EAP services to resume as soon as possible. If this is a medical emergency, please call 911 or your health care service provider," the DLA statement said.

DLA officials said the alert was meant for internal staff, and questions on the suspension, the contracts and Federal Occupational Health should be directed to the DoD.

There was no immediate response from the DoD, but Pentagon spokeswoman Heather Babb confirmed late Friday in an emailed statement that the EAP had been suspended, and the suspension affects DoD civilians at the Pentagon, the military branches, defense agencies and DoD field activities.

The Defense Department is the government's largest employer, with more than 700,000 civilians in the workforce worldwide.

A spokesman for the American Federation of Government Employees, which represents 250,000 civilians at the DoD, said the union had received word from the Defense Department that the Employee Assistance Program would be resumed, but "it may take a couple of days for the services to get turned back on."

FEW receives information from the following sources and contacts: Roll Call, Federal News Network, Politico, and FCW.