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**FEW Washington Legislative Update**

**April 16-30, 2022**

***Congress returns from recess on April 25, & 26 2022***

**In Congress:**

The Senate returns today April 25, 2022, from Easter recess for a five-week stretch before Memorial Day recess, while the House will return tomorrow, April 26.  Congress plans to continue work on a pressing list of items including additional pandemic relief money, additional Ukraine aid, approving legislation to strengthen the US supply chain, and re-engaging on a smaller social-spending package months after Build Back Better stalled.

Last week, the White House announced that it would request more supplemental aid for Ukraine as Russia’s military invasion continues.  Previously, Congress had approved $13.6 billion in military and humanitarian aid, as well as economic sanctions aimed at Russian trade.  President Joe Biden has yet to specify how much aid he’s looking for Congress to approve, though he has called for lawmakers to consider it swiftly when he does.  House and Senate leadership has also signaled that they may try to combine this funding with the pandemic aid. If they do, it could wind up making this legislation more contentious for passage, for those who’ve been eager to help Ukraine but much less interested in approving more Covid-19 funding.

For weeks, the White House has been urging Congress to pass more pandemic funding to help purchase treatments, tests, and vaccines.  Senators, however, have struggled to approve this aid due to disagreements about how it should be paid for and a push to add amendments addressing some additional legislative priorities.  Right before the recess, Democrats and Republicans reached an agreement in the Senate on $10 billion in Covid-19 relief, much less than the $22.5 billion the White House initially requested. This would be paid for using unspent funds that different agencies received as part of last year’s American Rescue Plan.  Some Senators, however, refused to move forward with a vote on the aid unless lawmakers considered an amendment preserving Title 42, a former immigration policy that enables the US government to block noncitizens from entering the country due to public health concerns.

The Senate will reconvene at 3:00 P.M. on April 25, 2022 and resume consideration of the nomination of Lael Brainard to be Vice Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System.  Brainard, who now sits on the Fed’s board of governors has said that the central bank’s “most important task” was to moderate the recent rise in consumer prices, which had disproportionately burdened low- and middle-income families.  The Federal Reserve will likely begin a rapid reduction of its $9 trillion dollar balance sheet as soon as its next policy meeting in May and is prepared to take stronger action when it comes to raising interest rates in order to bring down inflation.

A cloture vote on another Fed nominee, Michigan State University’s Lisa Cook, nominated to fill a vacant seat on the Board, could come as early as Tuesday, April 26, 2022.  If she and Brainard overcome the procedural hurdle, confirmation votes for them as well as Fed Chair Jerome Powell, renominated to his current position, and Davidson College dean of faculty Philip Jefferson, nominated to a vacant seat on the Board, would be expected later this week.

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**Tier I**

**In honor of Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month and National Crime Victims’ Rights Week, the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division and Office**

Violence Against Women (OVW) on April 26, 2022, held an event to highlight efforts to combat sexual misconduct and gender-based violence. The event, entitled “Access to Justice for Survivors of Sexual Harassment, Assault, and Misconduct,” featured Civil Rights Division and OVW officials and staff, as well as national community leaders and representatives from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

“We are committed to using our federal civil rights laws to confront gender-based violence, prosecute perpetrators of sexual assault and eliminate sexual harassment,” said Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke of the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division. “Sexual assaults and gender-based violence, whether carried out in our communities, workplaces, schools or jails, stand as a threat to our shared humanity. Through enforcement of the law, we are working to empower survivors, hold perpetrators accountable, expose unlawful systems that leave people vulnerable and ensure greater public safety in every corner of the country.”

“Sexual violence – in all its forms – is an affront to our values, impacting the lives of everyone in our communities, not just those of us who are survivors,” said OVW Principal Deputy Director Allison Randall. “Sexual assault harms all of us in a workplace or a neighborhood or a family. It ripples out. And it demands a response from all of us. That response must be rooted in what survivors themselves tell us they need. We must hold survivors at the forefront of our efforts to repair and prevent harm.”

At the beginning of the event, Deputy Attorney General Lisa O. Monaco’s pre-recorded remarks were aired and she discussed the Justice Department’s criminal enforcement efforts and the 2022 reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act.

The event also featured a discussion with Fatima Goss Graves, the Executive Director of the National Women’s Law Center, and Condencia Brade, the Co-Founder and Strategic Director of the National Organization of Sisters of Color Ending Sexual Assault, who are national leaders in representing survivors of sexual misconduct and advocating for affected communities.

The event also included panels where attorneys from the Civil Rights Division discussed their enforcement authorities to address sexual misconduct, and where an OVW attorney advisor and representatives from HHS and HUD discussed initiatives that provide economic and housing support and protections to survivors, including funding for transitional housing and family violence prevention services.

Assistant Attorney General Clarke also announced the creation of a new Coordinating Committee to Combat Sexual Misconduct, which will increase the Civil Rights Division’s outreach to affected communities and enhance civil and criminal enforcement actions.

Learn more about the Civil Rights Division’s work combatting sexual misconduct at http://www.justice.gov/crt and more about OVW’s work to provide assistance to victims and survivors of sexual violence at http://www.justice.gov/ovw.

*Sourced from* *DOJ Release*

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**Tier II**

**60 House Lawmakers Support 5.1 Percent Pay Increase for Federal Workers:**

A group of 62 House Democrats on Tuesday urged congressional appropriators to provide federal employees with a 5.1 percent pay raise in 2023, breaking with President Biden.

As part of his fiscal 2023 budget proposal, Biden proposed an average pay increase of 4.6 percent for civilian federal workers and members of the military, which, if implemented, would mark the biggest raise the federal workforce has seen in 20 years. Although it is unclear how that raise would be broken up between across-the-board increases to basic pay and an average boost to locality pay, traditionally, 0.5 percent of the pay raise has been set aside for locality pay increases.

In a letter, House Democrats led by Rep. Gerry Connolly, D-Va., pressed the leadership of the House Appropriations Committee to go further than the president and endorse a 5.1 percent average pay increase for feds, reflecting legislation introduced by Connolly and Sen. Brian Schatz, D-Hawaii, that would grant federal employees a 4.1 percent across-the-board boost to basic pay and a 1.0 percent average increase in locality pay.

Although the lawmakers applauded Biden’s efforts since taking office to improve federal employee compensation, including a 2.7 percent pay raise in 2022 and establishing a $15 minimum wage for all federal employees and contractors, they said that more needs to be done to counter the “chronic underinvestment” in the federal workforce over the past decade, particularly after two years of a global pandemic and growing inflation.

“Throughout the pandemic, civil servants performed the essential work of the federal government under the most extraordinary circumstances,” they wrote. “Federal government employees risked exposure to COVID-19 to deliver mail, collect census responses, provide health care to veterans, distribute lifesaving stimulus benefits, inspect meat and poultry facilities, and help research therapies and vaccines for COVID-19.”

The lawmakers argued that improving pay will be critical to making the federal government more competitive as it seeks to dramatically boost hiring, both as part of implementation of the bipartisan infrastructure law and to counter years of shrinking agency workforces.

“Currently, only 7 percent of the federal workforce is under the age of 30 while the civilian labor force enjoys nearly three times that number,” they wrote. “In 2020, the Federal Salary Council stated that federal employees make an average of 23.1 percent less than their private sector counterparts. With almost a third of the federal workforce eligible to retire in five years, we will face a talent crisis if we fail to make basic investments in federal pay that will attract early career talent to federal government service.”

*Sourced from* *Government Executive*

**Federal Retirement:**

**Legislation Would Prohibit TSP from Investing in Russia**

In case you missed it - recently proposed legislation would prohibit the Thrift Savings Plan from investing in any securities of an entity based in Russia.

If passed, the Terminating Securities from Putin (TSP) Act, introduced by Rep. Ted Budd (R-NC), would bar the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board from establishing any funds within the TSP that would include an investment of an entity based in Russia.

According to Budd, in 2017 the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board, which administers the TSP, planned to shift the International Stock Index Investment Fund (I-Fund) to the MSCI ACWI ex USA Investment Market Index, which includes Russian investments.

This change was ultimately postponed by the former administration. Currently, there is no federal prohibition to ensure that the TSP continues to stay divested from Russia.

“Members of our military and federal workforce should not have to wonder whether or not their retirement investments are coming from Vladimir Putin’s Russia,” Budd said in a statement. “I’m proud to introduce legislation that draws a line in the sand and provides moral assurances to 6 million members of the military and the federal workforce.”

According to *Federal News Network* on March 25, the TSP Board took action to confirm that there were no Russian investments after Budd proposed the legislation.  “The Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board….said it analyzed its investments in response to the legislation and concluded that no TSP funds contain Russian investments,” wrote *Federal News Network.*

“Members of our military and federal workforce should not have to wonder whether or not their retirement investments are coming from Vladimir Putin’s Russia, and I’m glad to see that my bill spurred on this confirmation that there are no Russian investments at this time,” Rep. Budd said in response to the TSP Board’s review.

**The full text of the proposed bill can be**read here**.**

**Source: https://www.myfederalretirement.com/tsp-prohibt-russia/**

*Sourced from* *Federal News Network*

**FEW Washington Legislative Update – April 16-30, 2022**

**Tier III**

**Paid Family Leave:**

On April 27th, more than 350 businesses announced their support and renewed calls for passage of a federal plan for paid family and medical leave. At present, the United States is one of only a handful of OECD countries worldwide that doesn’t provide any sort of federal paid leave, along with Papua New Guinea, Micronesia, Suriname, Tonga, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, and Palau.

Despite staggering, bipartisan public support, an economy that would be better off for it, and a workplace that would be fairer and easier to manage with it in place, President Biden’s landmark Build Back Better Act, which would provide paid leave for parents and caregivers, stalled in the Senate, wiping away many Americans’ hopes that paid leave — even just a few weeks of it, as he whittled his plan down to four weeks in an attempt to get it passed, would ever become a reality.

Despite that, business leaders around the country have reaffirmed their commitment to the development of a federal paid leave policy. With the help of Paid Leave for the United States, (PL+US) a non-profit advocacy group, the heads of companies like Spotify, Pinterest, Levi’s Patagonia, Etsy, who were vocal in their support of the Build Back Better Act, and Airbnb, Chobani, DoorDash, Dove Men+Care, Keen, and Reddit— brands new to the fight—along with hundreds of other brands and companies, issued a statement announcing their support for government action on the paid leave crisis.

They included “five core principles” that their businesses collectively embrace:

According to the report, the U.S. government is the single-largest purchaser of goods and services at $550 billion in fiscal 2019.

Paid leave is a fundamental element of addressing racial, class, and gender inequalities.

* Paid leave leads to better talent attraction, employee retention, and improved employee morale, contributing to greater business stability and viability.
* A federal paid leave program should be inclusive and protect all workers equally, regardless of what kind of work they do, where they live, or whom they love.
* A federal paid leave program should be comprehensive and support working people when they welcome a new child, care for a seriously ill family member, or care for one’s own serious illness.
* Everyone should be able to be there for their families in the moments that matter most. When families thrive, we all thrive.
* “American workers shouldn’t have to choose between the job they want and the family they love. A strong investment in paid leave and childcare would make the U.S. more competitive and would help rebuild a more inclusive and equitable economy,” Jenna Johnson, President of Patagonia, Inc., said in a statement.

The renewed push comes as Americans struggle with inflation and labor shortages, and many families are being crushed under the weight of debt accrued while they’ve taken unpaid leave from work to care for themselves or their families as the COVID-19 pandemic rages on.

“The most important job every parent has is taking care of their children. At Chobani, we have always put family first and are proud to have helped inspire more employers to offer full paid parental leave. Isn’t it time our nation’s leaders step up to ensure every parent in America has the time, ability, and means to bond with and care for their child?” Mark Broadhurst, Vice President of Impact & Advocacy of Chobani, said.

President Biden has indicated his dedication to paid leave reform in the U.S. despite his BBB act grinding to a halt. Earlier this year, during the State of the Union Address, the President mentioned paid leave and released a statement addressing his commitment to ensuring families aren’t forced to choose between work and caring for loved ones.

His updated plan is still under wraps, but there are indications that it will rely on tax credits for employers who provide workers with paid leave.

*Sourced from* *Fatherly*

**FEW Washington Legislative Update**

**General Interest – April 16-30, 2022**

**The OPM Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey**

## RELEASE: OPM Releases Government-wide Results from 2021 OPM Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey

### Survey results show continued resilience of the federal workforce

**Washington, D.C. –**Today on April 28, 2022, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) released government-wide results of the 2021 OPM Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (OPM FEVS). The OPM FEVS is an organizational climate survey administered to the federal workforce to provide agencies a snapshot of how their employees view their current work environment and help inform future agency actions. The Governmentwide Management Report released today shows that during a second year of unprecedented challenges, federal employees demonstrated remarkable resilience while continuing the critical work of the federal government on behalf of the American people.

“Federal employees are deeply motivated by their commitment to public service,” said OPM Director Kiran Ahuja. “The OPM FEVS survey results highlight their resilience in the face of two years of unprecedented challenges and show how they found creative solutions and leveraged workplace flexibilities to continue delivering results. The pandemic strained the public and private sectors alike, including federal employees. The Biden-Harris Administration’s commitment to the federal workforce is clear as the first priority for the President’s Management Agenda (PMA) is ‘strengthening and empowering the federal workforce.  As one of the priority leads for this important work, I am proud to help lead the federal government’s efforts to honor and uplift America’s workforce.

The PMA includes specific goals and measures to improve employee engagement in the workforce, and both the 2021 OPM FEVS survey and forthcoming revamped 2022 survey will provide critical data to inform agencies’ efforts to meet our important goals.”

The 2021 OPM FEVS survey results demonstrate that federal workers continue to maintain a positive perspective on their agencies’ ability to deliver quality work that meets the needs of their customers and delivers on agency goals. Continued support from supervisors with regard to health and safety, as well as promoting a positive work environment, were also important drivers during this period.

The OPM FEVS is administered to full-time and part-time, permanent, non-seasonal employees of departments/large agencies and the small/independent agencies that accept an invitation to participate in the survey. During 2021, OPM administered the survey to a majority of all eligible employees using a rigorous statistical sampling methodology for the ten largest agencies, with invitations sent to 865,425 employees.  A total of 292,520 employees completed a survey for a response rate of 34 percent.

**Background**

**Due to the pandemic, survey administration in 2021 differed from 2020 in some substantial ways, making year to year figures less comparable and contributing to a lower response rate, for example:**

* The 2021 OPM FEVS was in the field in November and December of 2021, rather than the more customary spring administration period
* The total fielding time was reduced from six weeks to five to avoid holiday period conflicts

**While private sector surveys contain material differences from the OPM FEVS survey, similar trends are visible in terms of engagement and satisfaction levels**

* A Gallup poll from January 2022 found that, for the first year in more than a decade, the percentage of engaged workers in the U.S. declined in 2021, dropping 2 points
* Noting the challenge in comparing year to year figures between the OPM FEVS in 2020 and 2021, the overall Employee Engagement Index moved from 72 percent in 2020 to 71 percent in 2021, and the Global Satisfaction Index declined from 69 percent in 2020 to 64 percent in 2021

**Key Statistics**

**The 2021 OPM FEVS survey demonstrates the continued resilience of the workforce through a second year of unprecedented challenges, and positive perspectives on workforce capabilities to deliver results; respondents had a high level of agreement that their work unit:**

* Met the needs of the customer (88 percent)
* Contributed positively to agency performance (86 percent)
* Achieved goals (85 percent)
* Produced high quality work (84 percent)

**Agency supervisors continue to provide strong support for their teams, with an 80 percent positive score for the Supervisors component of the Employee Engagement Index (EEI).  Three questions from this index rank in the top ten overall for highest levels of agreement, including:**

* My supervisor treats me with respect (86 percent)
* My supervisor supports my need to balance work and other life issues (84 percent)
* My supervisor listens to what I have to say (82 percent)

**Supervisors also contributed to a positive environment for employee health and safety, with 84 percent of respondents agreeing that supervisors “show concern for health and safety” and 79 percent agree that supervisors “create an environment where I can voice my concerns about staying healthy and safe.**

**Agency senior leadership may have opportunities to improve engagement with the workforce around transition, as 62 percent of respondents agreed that senior leaders “provide effective communication about what to expect with the return to the physical worksite.”**

**Looking ahead:**

**The PMA outlines the Biden-Harris Administration major priorities, goals, strategies and metrics for the Government to deliver results for the American people. The first priority is to strengthen and empower the federal workforce, and includes two major OPM FEVS related success metrics:**

* Create a more equitable employee engagement experience across the federal workforce, including across employee groups and organizational units within agencies:  Increase agency Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) Employee Engagement Index (EEI) scores by narrowing agency-identified gaps in EEI by employee group or organizational unit by 20 percent
* Promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) strategies and practices across all human capital activities: Increase scores across OPM FEVS new DEIA measures implemented with the 2022 survey

*Sourced from* *OPM Government*

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