



PROFESSIONAL MANAGERS ASSOCIATION

An Association for Federal Managers and Management Officials

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PMA Statement on Additional IRS Employees Returning to Work

Washington, D.C. –President Chad Hooper of the Professional Managers Association (PMA) - formed in 1981 by IRS Managers as a national membership association representing the interests of professional managers, management officials and non-bargaining unit employees in the federal government- released the following statement regarding news that the IRS is recalling employees for mission critical work in three states- Texas, Utah and Kentucky - on June 1:

“As the American people continue to rely on the IRS for economic relief and assistance, it has been consistently clear that employees are needed in-person at certain IRS facilities to reduce the significant backlog of mail correspondence being received and ensure phone systems are up and running to provide customer service to American calling with questions. Initially, the IRS took a volunteer approach to ensure only those who felt most conformable coming into facilities returned to work. As the needs of the American people have grown, so too must the number of employees returning to work,” Hooper said.

“The two primary concerns of PMA are ensuring our members and their IRS colleagues are protected and the American people are served. To that end, we are encouraged by the commitment by Commissioner Rettig to ensure no self-certifying high risk individuals or individuals who are ill are required to return to work, all facilities are cleaned regularly, employees have access to necessary protective equipment and that CDC guidelines relating to social distancing are maintained. We will be communicating closely with our members in chapters throughout the country to ensure this commitment is upheld,” Hooper explained. **“We are also pleased to know that walk-in offices will remain closed and only facilities with environments able to maintain social distancing are opened. This demonstrates that the Commissioner is aware of limitations at certain facilities that can increase risk of exposure to employees and the public, and is taking necessary precautions to mitigate that risk.”**

“While the Service has taken steps to ensure employees have access to leave in the event that they are not comfortable returning to work due to health reasons, we are concerned that employees with small children or other dependents who require the employee’s presence at home will slip through the cracks. Currently, the IRS has indicated these employees with need to use their personal leave if they are unable to report to work. This places employees in the impossible position of choosing between what is best for their family and their career,” Hooper continued. **“We have communicated these concerns to IRS leadership and learned that the Service believes it is hamstrung by leave regulations from the Office of Personnel Management and federal law. We have also encouraged the IRS to work with other agencies who have sought innovative solutions for such employees, including the Office of Management and Budget and Department of Justice. We encourage OPM and lawmakers to work together to improve flexibilities and leave options for employees with dependents.”**

“While noteworthy steps have been taken to ensure the health and safety of IRS employees returning to work, we encourage the IRS to explore methods of contact tracing so employees can be aware of possible exposure and stop chains of transmission from infecting the workforce. We also look to the Service’s leadership to provide managers with guidance on liability concerns regarding the extent to which a manager can require staff to adhere to their interpretation of CDC guidelines. Managers continue to worry about their own health and the health of their workforce, the Service must work to alleviate these concerns,” Hooper notes.

“The employees of the IRS have displayed an unwavering commitment to serving the public during these times; however, the American people have a part to play as well. PMA encourages all those who are able to submit their tax forms and correspondence to the IRS online rather than through the mail. Submitting forms online allows IRS employees to continue working from the safety of their own home and reduces the growth of the significant backlog of mail correspondence currently awaiting retrieval at facilities across the country. We strongly encourage the American people to realize this and utilize online systems so only those with no other option contribute to the paper backlog and receive timely replies. We can truly all play a role in protecting federal employees and ensuring adequate public service,” Hooper concluded.

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