

U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE  
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF GEORGIA  
Atlanta, Georgia

## Compensation and Benefits Package



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## Salary Increases/Awards for Assistant U.S. Attorneys

Salaries are determined under the guidelines set forth in the Department of Justice Administratively Determined (AD) Pay Plan. Factors used to determine starting salaries are: years of professional attorney experience since graduation from law school, a compatible AD grade and recruitment salary range, current salary and/or former federal attorney pay, and comparisons of salaries set for previously hired attorneys with the same years of attorney experience. In addition to basic pay, employees receive a locality pay supplement. Locality pay may be truncated to comply with pay ceiling.



In January of most years, federal employees receive a cost of living increase depending on the economy (amount determined by Congress).

Attorneys are eligible to receive an Annual Pay Review increase, performance payment and/or cash or time-off award based on their annual performance appraisal. Pay increases and awards are subject to fiscal year budget availability.

Employees are recognized for outstanding performance to include awards for special cases/projects and overall performance, (i.e., Special Act or Achievement Award, On-The-Spot Award, Time-Off Award, or Performance Award). See office Awards Policy for details.

## Salary Increases/Awards for Support (General Schedule) Employees

Salary is determined by the basic pay for your grade and step on the General Schedule (GS) Pay Chart or Special Salary Rate Schedule for certain occupations. In addition to basic pay, you are also entitled to receive a locality pay supplement which is an additional cost of living percentage determined by the geographical area of your position. The Locality Pay Rate is usually adjusted annually.

You are also entitled to Within-Rate Increases (WRI). This is the advancement in steps within the grade of your position. The General Schedule system is based on a 10-step rate within each grade. The waiting period for Steps 2, 3, and 4 is one year. The waiting period for Steps 5, 6, 7, is two years, and the waiting period for Steps 8, 9, and 10 is three years. These salary advancements are automatic as long as your performance is satisfactory.

Employees are also eligible to receive a performance award (cash or Quality Step Increase or time-off award), based on their annual performance appraisal. In addition, employees may receive recognition throughout the year for exemplary performance in the form of a monetary award (Special Act or Achievement Award, On-The-Spot Award), Time-Off Award, or non-monetary Northern District of Georgia Spot Award.

In January of most years, federal employees may receive a cost of living increase depending on the economy (amount determined by Congress).



## Vacation/Annual Leave



Full-time employees earn 13, 20, or 26 days of annual leave each leave year, depending on their years of government service. Employees with less than three years of government service earn 13 days each year, employees with between three and 15 years of government service earn 20 days each year and employees with 15 or more years of government service earn 26 days each year. Most employees have a maximum accumulation of 30 days each year. In special cases, forfeited leave may be restored. At separation, an employee is entitled to payment for all accrued annual leave.

## Sick Leave

All full-time employees, regardless of their length of government service, earn four (4) hours of sick leave each full biweekly pay period. Sick Leave can be used for: personal medical needs; to provide care for a family member (up to 13 days a year or 12 weeks a year if a family member has a serious health condition); or for bereavement purposes. Leave without pay may be requested and used for extended absences, such as for maternity purposes. The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 requires the provision of up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave to employees for certain family and medical reasons.

## Federal Holidays

**There are 10 paid federal holidays every year:**

New Year's Day	Labor Day
Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Day	Columbus Day
Presidents' Day	Veterans' Day
Memorial Day	Thanksgiving Day
Independence Day	Christmas Day



## Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance (FEGLI)

FEGLI offers group term life insurance. As such, it does not build up any cash value or paid-up value. It consists of Basic life insurance coverage and three Optional coverages. Basic coverage is your annual salary (rounded to the next \$1,000) plus \$2,000 and includes an Extra Benefit (at no additional cost) to employees under age 45. The Extra Benefit doubles the amount of Basic insurance until age 36, then decreases at 10 percent per year until age 45, at which time the extra coverage ends. Additional optional coverage is available as follows: Option A - \$10,000; Option B - coverage equal to one to five times the rate of annual salary (rounded to the next \$1,000); and Option C - family coverage of one to five multiples equal to \$5,000 per multiple up to \$25,000 for spouse and for each eligible child, \$2,500 per multiple up to five multiples or \$12,500.

The cost of Basic insurance is shared between you and the Government. You pay 2/3 of the total cost and the Government pays 1/3. Your age does not affect the cost of Basic insurance. You pay the full cost of Optional insurance, and the cost depends on your age.

Basic life insurance coverage is available to eligible employees and effective on the first day you enter in a pay and duty status. The cost of Basic life will be deducted from your pay unless you waive this coverage before the end of your first pay period. You may waive Basic coverage at any time.

Optional insurance for new employees is effective on the first day you are in a pay and duty status on or after the day your Human Resources office receives your election form. You have 60 days from the date of your appointment to an eligible position to elect Optional insurance.

A FEGLI calculator is available at <http://www.opm.gov/insure/life/index.asp> that allows you to determine the cost and benefits of various levels of optional insurance coverage.

You are eligible to continue enrollment into retirement if you retire on an immediate annuity, and you are enrolled during the five years preceding retirement or for the entire period during which the coverage was available to you.

## Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB)

The Federal Employees Health Benefits Program is paid for through employee and employer contributions and is intended to assist you and your eligible family members with expenses of illness and accident. It is a voluntary program. Eligible employees may enroll in FEHB coverage within 60 days of their appointment.

### What the Program offers you:

- You pay 25% of health care plan costs – Government pays 75%
- An annual opportunity, during open season, to enroll in a health benefits plan or change enrollment selection, if already enrolled.
- A choice of plans and options with group-rated premiums and benefits to include: APWU; Blue Cross and Blue Shield; GEHA; Mail Handlers; NALC; SAMBA; Aetna; Aetna HealthFund; and Kaiser Permanente
- Guaranteed protection that cannot be canceled by the insurance carrier.
- Coverage without medical examination or restrictions because of age, current health or pre-existing medical condition.
- Coverage without waiting periods after the effective date of enrollment.
- A payroll deduction method of making premium payments on a pre-tax basis.
- Temporary protection for 31 days (at no cost) after separation with an option to temporarily continue coverage for up to 18 months or convert to a non-group contract.
- Continued enrollment after retirement at the same cost as an employee. You must be enrolled (or covered as a family member) in any FEHB plan during the five years preceding retirement or enrolled for the full period of service since your first opportunity (if less than five years).
- Continued enrollment for eligible family members after the death of the employee or annuitant.
- For additional information, please visit the Office of Personnel Management's FEHB website at [www.opm.gov/insure/health](http://www.opm.gov/insure/health)

## Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program (FLTCIP)

This program provides an important benefit that can help pay long term care expenses that you and your qualified relatives may incur in the future. You may enroll in this program if you are eligible to enroll in FEHB. Each eligible person in the “Federal Family” has an independent right to apply for this insurance. The younger you are when you apply, the lower your premium. If eligible, you can enroll at anytime but, you must apply within 60 days of becoming eligible for this benefit to qualify for abbreviated underwriting.

For additional information on FLTCIP, visit  
<http://www.opm.gov/insure/ltc/index.asp>

## Federal Long Term Disability Insurance Program (FEG LTD)

This is a private, voluntary, group insurance plan. The underwriter for this plan changes, so please contact Human Resources for current plan information. This insurance is available to all active, permanent, full-time and part time (minimum 20 hours) employees of the Department of Justice. Long Term Disability Insurance covers a percentage of your income if you suffer from a disabling accident, illness, pregnancy or complications of pregnancy. Benefits begin after you have been disabled for a certain number of days, known as the elimination period. Benefit payments are reduced by other sources of income received, such as Workers’ Compensation, accumulated sick leave, Civil Service Retirement or Federal Employees Retirement benefits. If eligible, you can enroll at anytime but, you must apply within 31 days of becoming eligible for this benefit or during the open enrollment period to qualify for abbreviated underwriting.



## Flexible Spending Account (FSA)

A Flexible Spending Account is another benefit available to eligible employees that allows you to set aside money, on a pre-tax basis, to pay for certain out-of-pocket health and/or dependent care expenses. You determine how much money to allot on an annual basis, up to \$2500 for health care and up to \$5000 for dependent care expenses for eligible family members. FSA elections are voluntary and are not carried over from one plan year to the next.

Eligible employees have 60 days or until October 1 of any plan year to make an election to participate. Employees hired on or after October 1 are ineligible to participate in the current plan year, but can elect an FSA during the annual open season for the next Plan Year. Your elections will be binding throughout the plan year unless you experience a qualified status change.

For additional information on this benefit, visit [www.fsafeds.com](http://www.fsafeds.com)

## Retirement

The Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) became effective in 1987. Many of its features are "portable" so that employees who leave Federal employment may still qualify for the benefits.

The retirement system is a three-tiered retirement component plan:

- Social Security Benefits
- Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) Basic Benefit Plan
- Thrift Savings Plan Benefits (TSP)

## Social Security Benefits

The first available part of the retirement benefit is Social Security or Old Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance (OASDI). It provides monthly payments if you are retired and have reached at least age 62; monthly benefits if you become disabled; monthly benefits for your eligible survivors; and, a lump sum benefit upon your death. If you start receiving Social Security benefits at age 62, the amount you receive each month will be reduced because you are not at the full retirement age.

The full retirement age for individuals born before 1938 is 65. Because of longer life expectancies, the full retirement age is increasing for individuals born after 1938.

Most of the cost of Social Security is paid through payroll taxes. Each year you and the federal government, as your employer, pay an equal percentage of your salary up to a specified earnings amount called the maximum taxable wage base. The percentage you each pay for OASDI coverage, per pay period, is 6.20% of your earnings up to the maximum taxable wage base. You and the government also each pay 1.45% of your total pay toward the Medicare Hospital Insurance program.

For more information on Social Security, visit [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov)

## FERS

The FERS Basic Benefit portion is financed by a very small contribution from the employee and from the Government. Your contribution to the FERS Basic Benefit Plan is the difference between 7% of your basic pay and Social Security's tax rate, or 0.80%. Generally, new federal employees originally hired on or after 12/31/2013 are considered FERS FRAE (Further Revised Annuity Employees). The employee contribution for these employees is 4.4% of their salary.

To be vested (eligible to receive your retirement benefits from the FERS Basic Benefit plan if you leave Federal service before retiring), you must have at least five (5) years of creditable civilian service. Survivor and disability benefits are available after 18 months of civilian service.

You may withdraw your FERS Basic Benefit contributions if you leave Federal employment. However, if you do, you will not be eligible to receive benefits based on service covered by the refund. If you return to federal service, you may redeposit the amount refunded, plus interest, and have the service redeposited.

### **Creditable service toward retirement generally includes:**

- Federal civilian service for which contributions have been made or deposited.
- Military service, subject to a deposit requirement. (Service in the National Guard, except when ordered to active duty in the service of the United States, is generally not creditable). To receive credit for military service, generally, you

must deposit 3% of your military base pay. Interest begins two years after you are hired. With certain exceptions, you cannot receive credit for military service if you are receiving military retired pay.

- Leaves of absence for performing military service or while receiving workers' compensation.

At retirement, FERS Basic Benefits are paid monthly; the amount depends on the employee's pay and length of service. As in most retirement plans, a formula is used to compute the payments under the FERS Basic Benefit Plan. The Government averages the highest three (3) consecutive years of basic pay. This "high-3" average pay, together with the employee's length of service, is used in the benefit formula. The basic formula is 1% (1.1% if age 62 or older) of "high 3" multiplied by years of service supplemented by unused sick leave.

The third part of the Federal Employees Retirement System benefit is the most beneficial to future earnings.



The Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) is a retirement savings and investment plan for Federal employees. It offers Federal civilian employees the same type of savings and tax benefits that many private corporations offer their employees under the so-called "401(k)" plans. FERS employees may contribute a percentage of their basic pay up to \$17,500 (the IRS maximum elective deferral limit). This amount is subject to change annually. Please verify current limits at [www.tsp.gov](http://www.tsp.gov). New federal employees are automatically enrolled in TSP with a contribution of 5% of their basic pay. Employees may cancel or change their TSP contribution at any time.

The government will also match a FERS employee's contributions up to 5% (dollar for dollar for the first 3% and 50 cents to the dollar for the next 2%). When eligible, the agency will automatically contribute 1% of a FERS employee's basic pay each pay period into their TSP account. Employee contributions are not required in order to get the agency automatic 1% contributions.

**The TSP Program provides a number of benefits:**

- Choice of tax treatments for your contributions: Traditional (pre-tax) and Roth (after-tax)
- Choice of withdrawal options upon retirement or separation
- Portability if the employee leaves Government service
- The option to transfer money into your TSP account from a traditional IRA or eligible employer plan
- A loan program

### **Two approaches to investing:**

**L Funds:** These are “lifecycle” funds that are invested according to a professionally designed mix of stocks, bonds, and Government securities. You select your L Fund based on your “time horizon”, which is when you will need the money after you leave Federal service.

**Individual Funds:** You make your own decisions about your investment mix by choosing from any or all of the individual TSP investment funds (G, F, C, S, I)

## TSP Catch-Up Contributions

If you are age 50 or older and contributing the maximum amount of regular TSP contributions, you may elect to make “catch-up” contributions. TSP catch up contributions are a supplement to a TSP participant’s regular employee contributions. The amount of catch-up contributions are limited to \$5,500. This amount is subject to change annually. Please verify current limits at [www.tsp.gov](http://www.tsp.gov). Key features are:

- Catch-up contributions do not count against either the statutory contribution percentage limitations or the Internal Revenue Code’s elective deferral limit.
- Catch-up contributions are voluntary, as long as you are eligible, you can make catch-up contributions at anytime.
- Catch-up contributions are withheld on a pre-tax basis.
- Participants may stop their catch-up contributions at any time without penalty.
- Catch-up contributions are invested based on the same allocation as your regular contributions.
- Catch-up contributions are not eligible for matching contributions.
- Catch-up contributions for one year cannot continue into the following year, therefore, you must make a new election each year.

## Workers' Compensation

The Federal Employees' Compensation Act provides monetary compensation, medical care, and re-employment rights to federal employees who sustain injuries as a result of their employment or because of an illness or disease arising from work. It also provides for the payment of benefits, to include funeral expenses, to dependents if the injury or disease results in death.

## Bar Admission Fees/ Continuing Legal Education (CLE)

Each attorney is responsible for paying his or her bar admission fees and CLE costs. Attorneys not certified in the state of Georgia must take and pass the Georgia Bar Exam at their own expense no later than 18 months from the date of entry on duty. You are also obligated to become a bar member of the Northern District of Georgia, which requires a membership fee. An attorney is not given time off to study for the bar exam.

## Training Courses

The U.S. Attorney's Office offers excellent training at the National Advocacy Center (NAC) in Columbia, South Carolina. This facility offers many diverse



training courses and seminars to both AUSAs and Support staff. Several of the courses are acceptable toward your CLE requirements, and the cost generally is paid for by the government. The same training courses are offered by the NAC via the internet through our Justice Training Network.

## Exercise Facilities

The fitness center is located in the Richard B. Russell Federal Building and is free for all USAO employees. It includes Nautilus equipment, free weights, treadmills, and a stairmaster. There is also a TV in the exercise room. Locker rooms are provided with showers. Another government-sponsored facility is the Atlanta Federal Fitness Center, a full-service fitness center (10,000 sq. ft.) in the nearby Sam Nunn Federal Building. It offers state-of-the-art equipment and sound systems, and numerous group exercise classes.

## Parking

There are six parking facilities within walking distance of the Richard B. Russell Federal Building. The government does not reimburse employees for parking fees.



## Public Transportation

The government provides a subsidy for transportation via public transit systems. The Department of Transportation provides MARTA (Metro Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority), Cobb County bus system, Douglas County van pool, and Gwinnett County bus system transit passes free to employees.

Notes: