

# Ep #1: What's On Your Retirement Estimate?



## **Full Episode Transcript**

**With Your Hosts**

**Micah Shilanski and Tammy Flanagan**

**[Plan Your Federal Retirement Podcast](#) with Micah Shilanski and  
Tammy Flanagan**

## Ep #1: What's On Your Retirement Estimate?

You can spend. You can save. What is the right thing to do? Federal benefits, thrifts, savings plans, too. You can save your own way, with help from Micah and Tammy. You can save your own way, save your own way...

Micah Shilanski: Welcome to the Plan Your Federal Retirement podcast. I am your cohost Micah Shilanski, and with me is the amazing Tammy Flanagan all the way down in Florida. Tammy, how are you doing today?

Tammy Flanagan: Hi Micah. Hi, everyone. Florida is a little rainy today, but we're doing just fine. We're staying away from the COVID-19.

Micah Shilanski: That's the important things to do right now right?

Tammy Flanagan: That's the 2020 call for action right?

Micah Shilanski: That's right.

Tammy Flanagan: No one wants to get sick.

Micah Shilanski: Which is something good to always think about. Staying healthy and making those good decisions even more highlighted right now.

Tammy Flanagan: That's right.

Micah Shilanski: Well, Tammy, you and I wanted to get together and have just a conversation that's out there. Hopefully that our listeners are going to find this very valuable, but this is something that we've talked about for a little bit of doing a quick little series about getting ready for retirement.

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We want to have it slightly more informal. Just a nice conversation about what are some really key things that we see federal employees miss, or things that when we're working one on one with federal employees or teaching classes to federal employees that we want to make sure that we are looking at and having them address? I'd say there's multiple things. That's the reason it's going to be a five part series right?

Tammy Flanagan: Right. Yeah. I deal with a lot of individual clients just like you do, but from the benefit standpoint, I'm always telling them, "Before we can meet, I need to get to know you." The way I get to know them is to see all this documentation that really tells me who they are, where their career has taken them, what their salary rate is and once they send me these key documents, I can give them some degree of certainty of how much their retirement benefit's going to be.

Micah Shilanski: I really liked that. One of the things that I like to add to that, I like the way you said you need to get to know them in advance by looking at these documents. If you think about that, that's the way OPM is going to process your retirement. That exact same way is, they're going to get to know you, the federal employee, based on the documents that are inside of your EOPF. Whether they are accurate or inaccurate.

This is a really important piece in understanding what is in that electronic official personnel file? Then if something's wrong, I mean, Tammy I think you'd agree with this. The only person that's really going to know something is wrong with your service history is you because you're the one that lived your service history.

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Tammy Flanagan: That's right. If anybody knows where you've been and where you've worked, it's got to be the employee, not me and not you. Whatever they tell us, or don't tell us, that's going to really have a big bearing on whether or not what information we can give them is going to be accurate. Same thing for the personnel office.

If you're going to your HR office to ask for a retirement estimate, but yet you fail to let them know, "Hey, I served in the military or I worked part time." Where they don't see that when they review your records, then you're not going to get an accurate estimate. It's really important that we all are using the same data because the calculations, I know you'll agree to this. They're second grade math. It's not hard to calculate a federal retirement. Otherwise, I couldn't it. I passed third grade, but as far as that goes, it's easy. It's just the details of what can influence that estimate, what counts, what doesn't count? What's the difference if you retire at 62 versus 56? There's a lot of things that go into it, but the basic estimate's pretty easy.

Micah Shilanski: Let's kind of get into that because I would agree. This is one of the big things that I want to start off with right off the bat when I'm meeting with people. Is well, is not only do I want to look at their OPF, their SF-50s et cetera, but then I want to have a conversation with them that says, "Hey, now I've looked at this. Now you tell me about your federal history and let's see if those two things match. Is everything there?"

What are things that federal employees should be looking at, as let's just start broad, what should be inside of that OPF, official personnel file, that they should be looking at?

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Tammy Flanagan: Well, I wanted to start off by saying that when an employee retires, there's two things that OPM uses and they use it as a cross-reference to see if they're giving you an accurate retirement benefit that really reflects what you've done.

The first part of this is from payroll. Most of us don't have access to our payroll information other than our biweekly leave and earning statement, but what OPM gets from the agency is your retirement record. There's actually a biweekly record maintained of every pay date. It shows how many hours you were paid for whether or not you were on leave without pay. If you separate from that agency, it shows the final date you were there. Then that pay card goes to OPM. If you've worked for three or four different agencies, it's critical that all of those pay cards have been sent to OPM.

They're filed in a one of those metal file cabinets like we used to have. I don't have any anymore. They keep them they're up in Pennsylvania, OPMs Retirement Services Center.

Now the part that we can do something about, the part that we can make sure it's accurate is our personnel information. That's what we're talking about today is the information that's in your electronic official personnel folder.

The first thing you need to know as an employee is how do I access that? I find a varying amount of familiarity with how to do that between different people that I talk to. I think sometimes it has to do with the nature of the work that they do or the agency they work at, or how close they are to this personnel information.

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The first thing I would tell someone to do is to make sure you know how to get into your eOPF. You'd be surprised how many people tell me they don't know how to do that. If you don't know how, you need to contact your HR office and they can walk you through the steps of how to do it, or they might tell you, "We have to do it for you." I think in some intelligence agencies, they may have to do it for you. However you do it, it's important that you can access that information.

What you're looking for is the details that show your whole federal career, your history. The date you started. I always want to see an employee's initial enter on duty date on an SF-50 saying, "This is the date we hired you, the effective date of your appointment." That's for sure then you're going to see that to say, "Okay, they started on 05/02/1990." That's clearly documented. I used to work at the FBI and we always needed evidence for everything. This is the same thing.

Micah Shilanski: That's a good thing, especially for the FBI, we like evidence.

Tammy Flanagan: Right we want evidence. You can tell me, you started May 2, 1990, but I want to see the evidence because you might think you did and it was really 1992 and that's going to make a big difference.

Once I see that initial SF-50, when you started, that's your personnel action statement, on those personnel action statements, which sometimes we just refer to them as SF-50s. You're also going to see what retirement coverage you had. You'd be surprised how many people don't realize that sometimes they didn't start out under FERS or they might not have been CSRS initially they might've been hired during that interim period when FERS was first

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implemented. There's a lot I can tell by looking at that initial SF-50.

Micah Shilanski: Especially I would say in Alaska because we have a lot of forest service park service out here, et cetera. I like to pick on them in a very loving way, but there's a very notorious for hiring people under a temporary status. That's going to be there or it's seasonal, but they're not getting retirement benefits.

Tammy, to your point, they could have said, "Hey, I started in 1990." "You absolutely did. However, that first time period X amount of time or years does not count for your retirement because you weren't paying in the retirement system." That's one of the really important reasons you need to be looking at these documents.

Tammy Flanagan: Absolutely. I think one of the misunderstandings that a lot of people have is that if they have this situation like you just mentioned, if you get, and this is another tool that you can use as you're planning your retirement, but if your payroll office provides you with an annual benefits summary or a benefit statement. On that statement, it might say, "Here's when you're eligible to retire. Here's how much based on today's dollars that you're going to get," but keep in mind that payroll document, didn't take into account that the first three years you were a park ranger under a temporary appointment that doesn't count.

It's really important that when you are getting ready to retire, when you're getting ready to walk out the door within the next three to five years, go to your HR specialist and have them run you an estimate. Not because you can't do it yourself, like you said, it's second grade math, but because they're going to see those things like, "Oh my goodness, there's the first two years, three

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years doesn't count because it was not covered by FERS. It was after the date, we could pay a deposit."

When I start saying stuff like that, we start to get in the weeds and getting more technical. I don't expect the average employee to know all those ins and outs or rules, but your HR specialist should know that and they have software that can help weed that out and really give you an accurate calculation.

Micah Shilanski: Now, Tammy, one of the comments that I'll get sometimes talking with people, it says, "No wait Micah. I know I have 20 years because I got my 20 year pin. I had a celebration at 20 years. So I know I have 20 years of federal service." How does that relate to retirement?

Tammy Flanagan: Yeah, I could give you an example of that. When I worked way back when, it's been over 30 years since I worked at the Bureau, but I remember distinctly. This one occasion where I had a lady who was age 60 and she had her 20 year pin proudly displayed on her dress and she came in to retire. She was going to go out the end of the month. She didn't give a whole lot of notice. Most people give at least 60 days, but she came in within 30 days of her date that she desired for retirement.

She was 60. She had over 20 years of service a little bit over 20 years and she wanted to walk out the door and collect her benefit. That is her eligibility requirement, 60 with 20. The first thing I did as a benefit specialist is I pulled her personnel folder back then it was a cardboard folder in a file cabinet. I started looking through her SF-50s, just like we were talking about. I noticed that when we had hired her, she was hired on an indefinite appointment and it was temporary.



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She didn't have civil service coverage during that time and she wasn't full time, she was intermittent. When you're intermittent, you don't get credit for the whole year if you only worked 20 hours a week or 30 hours a week.

I had to go through the first three years of her career and add up the actual hours or days that she actually worked. Out of three years of time, she only came to work 18 months. She had three years of that, 17 years of full time. Her retirement was going to be 18 and a half years of service credit, not 20.

Micah Shilanski: If you're paying attention, this runs us into a problem. With 18 years of service and 60 years young.

Tammy Flanagan: Big problem. She got angry. I don't blame her because no one had ever explained to her that having that 20 year pin didn't mean that she had 20 years of creditable service for retirement.

I think it's important to know that you have a service computation date for things like leave accrual and getting your service pin, but there's another service computation date we call your retirement SCD.

That's where we look at your service in the terms of what counts for eligibility and also what counts in the calculation of your benefit. This is where it gets in the weeds a little bit and a little confusing. This is where retirement specialists can come in real handy.

Micah Shilanski: No, those are really good points. Tammy, so if we get the SF-50s, now you get at least one SF-50 a year. Notification of personal action, more than likely you have a bunch of them. One of the things that I always encourage my clients to do is, in your personal

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possession, so electronic is fine, but in your personal possession, non-government computer, non-government USB device, but I want you to have every single SF-50 you were ever issued.

I always think that's good. Now it's a bit overkill potentially because some of those SF-50s might be a little overlap or redundant, but I think that's a good rule of thumb to make sure we have all of them. So you can know what your service time is. What are your thoughts on that?

Tammy Flanagan: Oh, I totally agree because going back to the day when everything was in paper and we had carbon copies, there was always a copy that said employee copy. There was another copy that said official personnel copy. I think there might've been a third one for something else, but no, I think it was just two, because I remember one time I was working a weekend just to make some extra money way back when. Our job was to purge personnel folders. Again, this was prior to internet and computers and all of that.

The one guy sitting next to me, he was there week after week and so did I come. The one week he was looking at everybody else and he says, "Why are you not taking those SF-50s out of the folders?" I said, "Because they don't get purged." For two weeks he had been purging everybody's SF-50s.

Micah Shilanski: Oh, no.

Tammy Flanagan: Yeah. If those employees had not saved their own copy, it's gone.

Micah Shilanski: Wow.

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Tammy Flanagan: It's very hard to go back and restore that personnel folder. Obviously there's that second backup, which is the payroll record, but you really want to have those SF-50s because that's your double-check that's that safeguard. Yeah, that used to happen more than you would think.

Micah Shilanski: Even transfers of agency, I've seen it happen where one agency just doesn't transfer records to the next one. I don't know the details of why, but I can multiple stories with clients that they move from one agency to the next then back to another agency. One of those agencies didn't transfer anything. They had a huge gap in their service record.

Anytime you had to go back to OPM and dispute and say, "Hey, there should be more creditable service et cetera." The SF-50s saves my bacon left and right. Payroll records, I have found a lot harder to get payroll record, time to count, but SF-50 are so much easier.

Tammy Flanagan: I always tell people, "Who really cares if you get credit for that last five years that you worked other than you." If you care enough about it and it's worth a lot of money, you better care. Keep those records because that's your proof of what you've done, where you've been. You could even supply your own copies and put those in your personnel folder. They're just as good as the agency ones.

Micah Shilanski: Let's talk about that. It's not just important to have this SF-50. They have to say certain things on them. So they have to be accurate. What are some of the things that we should be looking at when we review the SF-50? There's like five or six things that you don't need to read the whole thing in depth, but five or six key points that we should be

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looking at to make sure it's accurate for retirement purposes.

Tammy Flanagan: For retirement purposes, of course you want to look at the effective date. Whatever that SF-50 is issued for whether it's a termination, whether it's a change in pay grade, you're getting a promotion or a step increase, there's always an effective date. We want to see the effective date of something. Whether it's a pay increase, whether it's a termination or an appointment. Whether it's a period of leave without pay or a period of temporary assignment.

Always look at the effective date and then look at what it is. What's the nature of the action. If it's a bonus or a cash award, that's nice to get those nice to save those. You have a record of how many times you got patted on the back, but those aren't really going to affect your retirement. Anything that shows something more significant, definitely want to pay attention to those and their effective date.

Also, you want to look at the retirement box because some people didn't start out under FERS and FICA. Like we were saying before, some people only paid into FICA if they were on a seasonal appointment or some employees started CSRS, they transferred to FERS. So there's an effective date of when their retirement coverage changed, which is going to affect the calculation of their benefit.

Then we also have that unique category called Civil Service Offset. Someone who had a break in service left under Civil Service, came back now they're under offset. So we need to know those things to give them an accurate calculation.

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It's your retirement coverage, the effective date of whatever the action was, and also your work schedule. There's several work schedules. One is full time. Most federal employees work full time. However, a lot of federal employees work part time, 20 hours a week, 24, 32. That's going to affect the calculation of your retirement.

We need to know when did that part time service stop or start, and when did it stop or when did it change to a different schedule. Intermittent, that's like the woman I was telling you about that had 18 months, even though she worked three years because intermittent service sometimes is referred to as WAE. That means when actually employed. You only get to count the days or the hours that you actually worked.

We don't see that a lot, but we do see it in some people who work piecework or they work seasonal jobs, that type of thing. We still see it. Intermittent, or WAE, part time, full time, and then there's leave without pay is actually a work schedule.

Leave without pay wouldn't affect your retirement. If it's just two weeks here, three weeks there, but if we add it up and it's more than six months of leave without pay in a calendar year, that could affect your retirement. There's rules according to, if you went off on leave without pay for military service, that's different, or workers' comp, but just normal leave without pay can also affect your retirement. We're looking at all those things.

Micah Shilanski: Now I know Tammy just went through a lot of stuff Tammy that was great. If you feel a little overwhelmed by this, do not worry. If you're on our email list, you should've got an email from us that has a link to these documents. If not it's [planyourfederalretirement.com](http://planyourfederalretirement.com). I know that's a little

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long, but [planyourfederalretirement.com/one](http://planyourfederalretirement.com/one) because this is our first episode.

We're going to put a document up of an example of the SF-50 and highlighting these things, just what Tammy was talking about. So it's an easier reference, a template if you will, that now you can compare as you're going back through your eOPF. Sorry Tammy I just wanted to throw that in there for listeners.

Tammy Flanagan: Oh, no, that's great. Yeah. I think it is worth taking a look at it and maybe even relistening to this broadcast. So you can kind of go through it and see all the things that are going to be something you want to pay attention to because when I scan through people's SF-50s, when they send them to me, I'm not reading the whole thing. I'm looking for those key elements that are really going to impact their eligibility for when they can retire and the calculation of the benefit. Those are all going to be important.

Micah Shilanski: Let's go on. So we talked about those SF-50s, what else should we be looking at in our eOPFs? I would say another one that's going to be there really important would be beneficiary designations. I find this really... Most of the people I meet with about over 60% that come to my office have wrong beneficiary designations.

It's crazy to think about, but it's so true because not only do you have multiple beneficiary designations. You've got your last paycheck, you got your first pension, you got your life insurance, Federal Employee Group Life Insurance, and your Thrift Savings Plan, your TSP that's going to be. You have four different forms that have to get filled out. Most people don't get around to ever filling them

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out A, or B updating them if life changes since they're 30 years when they started as a federal employee.

Tammy Flanagan: Keep in mind that sometimes all of these beneficiaries are not filed in your personnel folder. The ones that are in there, the ones you should find, if you ever filled one out would be the one for life insurance or Fegley. That's going to be there.

You're going to find one in there for something called unpaid compensation, which is your last paycheck, your unused annual leave, which could be the most important one to your spouse who might be left behind having to pay the mortgage next month. They want to make sure they have access to your last paycheck.

Unused annual, even last paycheck, Fegley Life Insurance, and also the FERS Retirement Beneficiary Designation. You won't find CSRS filed in your personnel folder, OPM keeps that one, but if you're a FERS employee, as most federal employees are today, you'll find the FERS. The FERS Beneficiary Designation filed in your eOPF.

Now, for TSP, everybody should have a TSP account. That beneficiary is always maintained by the Thrift. In their service centers where they'll maintain all those beneficiary forms for TSP. If you're not sure who you designated, you can check your annual statement that comes in the mail around February, or you can go to [tsp.gov](http://tsp.gov) and access your account and you can find it there or just call the Thrift line. They can look it up for you as well.

I always tell people, "If you're not sure, and you don't feel like going through all of that file a new set. The most

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recent set on file is going to take precedence." If you've updated your beneficiary forms 15 times, you'll see 15 copies of that form in your personnel folder because they're never discarded. Those are permanent records every time you fill one out, they're maintained.

Micah Shilanski: Another time to update these, I always get all the new beneficiary forms anytime I'm updating clients, estate planning documents. If we're amending the will, replacing the will, creating a trust, anything like that.

Now, this isn't a requirement, nor am I an attorney, therefore neither Tammy and I give legal advice. All those fun disclosures here, but really, I like to have a uniform statement when you're updating any estate planning documents.

If I'm going to update a will or a trust, I'm going to go through at the same time and update all beneficiary designations for our clients. Anything with a dollar sign around it, you can have a beneficiary designation. Whether it's a bank account, an IRA, a Roth, an investment account, your TSP, life insurance, anything with a dollar sign could have a beneficiary designation. We find it really important to make sure those are up to date for two reasons.

Number one, let's make sure they're current and accurate. We think a lot what things are, then we actually review the documents and it's not what we thought it was.

Yeah, and two stuff gets lost. Stuff gets lost by custodians. I'm not blaming TSP, or OPM, or Schwab, or Fidelity, any of them, but you know what? Life happens, things get lost and then misplaced. If this designation is misplaced, this could cause a very big problem for your



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survivor. All right, I'll get off my soap box here, but really, really important to get those updated.

Tammy Flanagan: No, and I agree with you Micah because anyone who has ever worked in a personnel shop has had to come face to face with the survivors. Then you look at the beneficiary form and you look at the survivor, it's a different person.

That means that they either forgot to update it or something was misfiled or misplaced and that does happen. I agree. I would update them whenever you want to. There's no limit of how many times you can change your beneficiary form or file one that's exactly the same as the one you filed before.

It should go without saying, you want to keep your copy of that in a safe place where someone can find it, especially name somebody kind of obscure. You want your nephew to get all your money in the TSP. Well, he may not even know that you're leaving him that money to inquire about the benefit. If TSP can't find them and I don't know that they'll really come looking for him, it's good that he knows to file for that benefit.

Micah Shilanski: Very much so. All right, I know we're getting a little long here, but real quick, what are some other documents that we should be looking at inside of that OPF?

Tammy Flanagan: Well, there's rules for continuing your health and life insurance into retirement. One of the rules is you have to have coverage for five years. You want to make sure that there's evidence in your personnel folder, that you've been under the FEHB Program for the last five years of your career because it's not any five years, it's the final five.

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If you don't have that, maybe you were covered under your spouse's federal health plan and now you've switched it over to your name and that doesn't show five years of evidence. You might want to get a copy of your spouse's enrollment form to show that you were a family member under their plan previously, or maybe you're a military retired and you have Tri-Care and you want to use that as part of your five years.

We'll put a copy of that Tri-Care record in your personnel folder. That's fine. You can file things there as well. You can request that they be placed in there so that when the time comes to retire, it's already there. The agency will see evidence of your five years of coverage. They will submit that and send it to OPM.

With life insurance, every time you increase your life insurance, that new multiple, that new option has to be in effect for five years as well.

I've mentioned this today because we just had an open enrollment, not just, but there was an open enrollment in 2016, which was less than five years ago. In fact, that enrollment period, the effective date was October 1st of 2017.

Five years won't come about until October 1st of 2022. If you're someone who increased your life insurance because you didn't have to pass a physical exam during the open enrollment and you want to carry that into retirement, it's not going to be available to you until after October 1st of 2022. There's some important little rules to keep in mind when it comes to retirement planning.

Micah Shilanski: Tammy, I want to jump back to the life insurance because you said something. You said, and I'm going to repeat this

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and you can correct this because I think there might be a little bit of misinformation there.

You made a comment that anytime your life insurance changes, you got to have that five years in order to be in there right? So if someone goes from increases a pay grade or gets a step increase or anything their pay changes. Well that changes the multiple right? Because on option B, you can have up to five times. If they make a pay change or do they have to wait on their five years?

Tammy Flanagan: No. I'm glad you clarified that Micah, because I'm talking about, if you elected to increase the option, if you added option A or you increased the multiples of option B, then that increased amount of coverage, not the fact that you got a pay raise or a pay grade increase, that's going to happen hopefully more often than every five years. If you actually increase the number of options or multiples of options, then those have to be in effect for five years.

Then the other thing is too, if you've decreased your life insurance, let's say you had five multiples of option B and it got too expensive, you don't need it. So you dropped it down to three multiples. Well, you've had those three multiples for 25 years. Of course those will follow you into retirement. Doesn't matter that you just dropped two off. You can reduce or cancel life insurance benefits at any time.

Micah Shilanski: Even into retirement, which makes it really nice.

Tammy Flanagan: Yeah, absolutely.

Micah Shilanski: Now I heard something and I didn't know this until I was doing a retirement class a couple of years ago and I've only heard it once and never again. There was a

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retirement specialist that was in there and I was talking about the importance of the OPF and making sure everything was in there.

She came up to me later and said, "Micah, make sure you tell people that there are two sides to the OPF on the HR. There's a permanent side to the eOPF and a non permanent." I was like, "Temporary, do things expire?" She's like, "Well, not necessarily, but there is a permanent side to this." How does that come into play?

Tammy Flanagan: Well, I'm not that type of a specialist, so I'm not exactly sure what all gets put on that other side of the eOPF. I was more concerned in dealing with retirement counseling and retirement processing of the permanent side because everything I'm talking about goes on the permanent side.

One other thing, some people might need out of their OPF is if they're covered in a law enforcement position or firefighter position. A record of that covered service, especially under law enforcement. If you've worked for different agencies and you went from DEA to ATF or some other agency where you were a federal law enforcement officer, make sure that covered service document comes with you. That's important as well, because you want to make sure you have that 20 years of employment.

Micah Shilanski: All of these things, if something's missing, you can't find something in your EOPF or you need to provide something to your HR because it's just not there. No worries if it's not, let's just get it in there. I think I'd go out of my way to ask and confirm that's going to be in the permanent side of my eOPF. Would you please make sure? And let's get that confirmation back.

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All of these little baby steps really helps smooth out that process in retirement because you're going to have to go through this. The question is, do you want to go through this because there was a problem with OPM? And they're sending you a love letter that says, "Oops, you don't have 20 years to retire, go back to work." Or do you want to do it while you're still having a paycheck, come in and make sure everything is put together. If you do it while you're working and I'm biased. I'm a planner. I like to plan in advance, but if you do it while you're working, I find it so much easier than in that transition time or if there's a problem.

Tammy Flanagan: I can give you a good example of why this is so important. I had a client a while back, she had transferred to FERS. That was one of the things that kind of changed her career a little bit, but not only that, but she also had two periods of leave without pay that were more than six months. She had two periods in her career when she worked part time and of course this is because she had two children, the leave without pay. The part time was surrounding the birth of the children. Oh, and she had a period of temporary service at the beginning of her career.

I wanted to make sure before she went off and retired that she did have enough service to retire. I went through this with a fine tooth comb, adding up the hours of work she had. Making sure everything was right where it needed to be. I also, of course, I kept documentation of all of this so that if need be we could prove it.

She retired and this was back in the day when OPMs retirement processing was really lagging. It was taken like six months just for an ordinary case. So hers took nine

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months to process. She had left with just 30 years at age 56. She was just meeting the requirements to retire. Everything went through to OPM. She got interim pay, interim pay was coming.

Finally, nine months into this, OPM finished with her case and they send her a letter saying, "Guess what Diane? You don't have 30 years. Yours is going to be an MRA plus 10 retirement, which means you're going to take a 30% reduction and not get a FERS supplement." Well, she didn't need a 30% reduction and she definitely needed her supplement because all of her financial planning was set on a certain amount of money coming in.

I had heart failure when she told me she got this letter, but luckily I had saved all the documents. I went back through it. I'm like, "No, she has 30 years." We went back and we filed a what do they call it when you file a...

Micah Shilanski: It's not a claim.

Tammy Flanagan: It's not a claim. You're challenging.

Micah Shilanski: Yeah.

Tammy Flanagan: You can challenge what OPM says because you know sometimes people make mistakes. We challenged it for lack of the proper word for that. OPM came back to her and they said, "Oh, sorry, Diane. We went back and we reviewed our calculations." And what had happened was they were prorating her part-time service when they shouldn't have. They finally did agree with what we had come up with before she retired, but you know what it goes to show if number one, if she didn't know to challenge it, she would've just said, "Oh, well I'm stuck."

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Number two, if we hadn't saved the documentation, she couldn't have proved it even if she had to. That's why it's so important to know what you should be getting. Number one, know what you're entitled to. Then secondly, save the record, save the evidence because otherwise it's your word against theirs. The government always wins if you can't prove them wrong, so very important.

Micah Shilanski: So, so important. All right, we want this podcast, not only to be hopefully a little bit fun for you, educational for sure, but about action items that are going to be there. Tammy, let's go through just a couple of action items and again, if you're on our list or jump on our website, [planyourfederalretirement.com/one](http://planyourfederalretirement.com/one) for the first episode. We're going to have these listed out for you to make your life a little bit easier, but I'll kick this off real fast.

I'll say that in that eOPF why don't you go back and get every single SF-50 you were ever issued in your personal possession. Electronic is fine, if it's on your personal computer and then going forward, whenever you're issued one, go and grab it. Throw that in your personal record.

Tammy Flanagan: Along with that, your beneficiary designations that are filed, make copies of those, especially if you don't have them in your own possession already. Those should be in your personal possession as well. What else did we talk about?

Micah Shilanski: Beneficiary copies as well, yep. Your health certification as well. I think your health certification, having that inside of there. Also, any other odd things that are going to be there. If you've bought back time. Military time, or made a redeposit of federal service or something of that nature. That love letter that you got from OPM that says, "Hey,

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you bought this time back," that confirmation you need to keep that.

If you don't have it, that copy of that check with OPM, that paperwork, any documentation, any evidence Tammy, as you say, that shows you bought that time back or made a deposit really, really important to keep that in your records as well.

Tammy Flanagan: Yeah the more you have the less trouble you'll have in processing that claim. Be a smoother transition. We all want a smooth transition into retirement.

Micah Shilanski: Amen. Of course the most important action item that you need to do hands down is tune into our next episode. We're going to be doing another one going through the second part in our five part series.

We would really love to get your feedback and comments. Whether it's on the website, you can go ahead and comment in, or you can email us at [newsletteratplanyourfederalretirement.com](mailto:newsletteratplanyourfederalretirement.com). We would love to get your comments. What'd you think about the episode? Again, we're new to this, Tammy and I, at least the podcast side.

Any tips we would love to hear it. What do you guys want us to cover in the future? So this goes, well, five part series kind of kicks off and we get some good listeners. What's the next thing that's important in your list, your mind that you want us to cover on our next episode?

Tammy Flanagan: Sounds good. It was great doing this Micah I hope we can do it again soon.



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Micah Shilanski: It was a ton of fun. Well guys, until next time, happy planning.

Hey, before you go, a few notes from our attorneys. Opinions expressed herein are solely those of Shilanski & Associates, Incorporated, unless otherwise specifically cited. Material presented is believed to be from reliable sources, and no representations are made by our firm as to other parties, informational accuracy, or completeness. All information or ideas provided should be discussed in detail with an advisor, accountant, or legal counsel prior to implementation.

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