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Federation of Federal Employee Benefit Advocates

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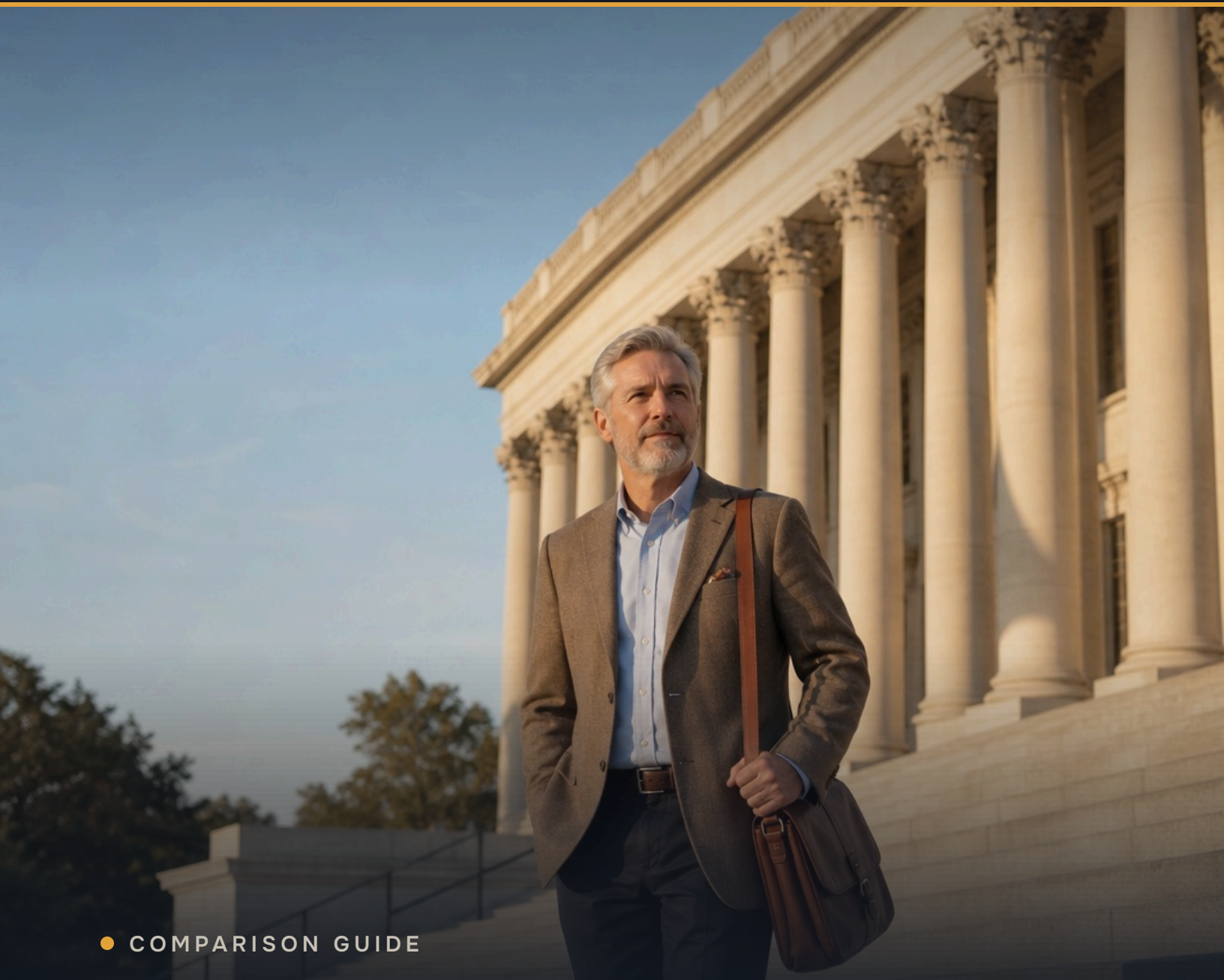

COMPARISON GUIDE

FERS retirement options *at a glance.*

Full voluntary, VERA, discontinued service, MRA+10, deferred and postponed: what each pathway means for your pension, your health coverage and your lifetime income.

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FERS retirement options *at a glance.*

Six pathways out of federal service, and what each one means for your pension, your health insurance and your lifetime income. Find your row, then read the rules that change the answer.

Pathway	Eligibility	Immediate annuity	FERS supplement	FEHB and FEGLI	Early penalty	Common use
Full voluntary	62 with 5 years, 60 with 20 years, or MRA with 30 years	Yes	Yes, if under 62 at retirement	Yes, with the 5-year rule	None	Standard retirement once eligible
VERA Voluntary Early Retirement Authority	Age 50 with 20 years, or any age with 25 years. The agency must offer it.	Yes	Yes, from your MRA until the month before 62	Yes, with the 5-year rule	None	Agency downsizing or reorganization
DSR Discontinued Service Retirement	Same ages as VERA. Involuntary separation, not for misconduct.	Yes	Yes, from your MRA until the month before 62	Yes, see the 5-year rule	None	RIF with written notice of proposed involuntary separation
MRA+10	MRA with at least 10 years of service	Yes, but reduced	No	Yes, see the 5-year rule	Yes: 5% for every year under 62	Retire early with some benefits intact
Deferred	At least 5 years of service; left before full eligibility	No. Begins at 55 to 62 depending on MRA and years	No	No	Not applicable	Left service early; no other pathway qualifies

Postponed	Same as MRA+10	**No. Generally 60 or 62 depending on years**	**No**	**Yes, paused at separation and restored when the pension begins**	Not applicable	Avoid the MRA+10 penalty, or delay the pension for tax reasons

Key rules and things to know

The 5-year FEHB rule

To carry FEHB into retirement you must have been continuously enrolled for the 5 years immediately before your retirement date, or since your first opportunity to enroll. This applies to every pathway except deferred retirement, where FEHB is not available. Under postponed retirement FEHB pauses at separation and restarts when you claim your pension.

The MRA+10 penalty

Retire under MRA+10 with an immediate annuity and your pension is permanently reduced by 5% for every year you are under 62. On a $30,000 annuity taken 5 years early that is $7,500 less every year, for life. Postponed retirement avoids it: leave service, keep your FERS contributions in the fund, and claim at 62 or another qualifying age.

The FERS supplement

The Retiree Annuity Supplement goes to FERS employees who retire before 62 under a qualifying immediate unreduced annuity (full voluntary, VERA or DSR). It approximates the Social Security earned through federal service and bridges income to 62. It is not available under MRA+10, deferred or postponed retirement, and an earnings test applies: in 2026, earning more than $24,480 a year reduces it by $1 for every $2 over the limit.

Your MRA depends on birth year

Born before 1953: 55. Born 1953 to 1964: 56. Born 1965 or later: 57. Your MRA drives eligibility for MRA+10, the MRA with 30 years pathway and postponed retirement.

The survivor election touches every pathway

Whichever pathway you choose, an immediate annuity requires a survivor annuity election. It decides whether your spouse receives part of your pension if you die first and whether your spouse can keep FEHB. Once your first regular annuity payment arrives and the 30-day window closes, the election is permanent.

VERA must be offered

You cannot elect VERA on your own. Your agency offers it during an authorized period, typically a downsizing or reorganization. When offered it waives the standard age and service rules, allowing retirement at 50 with 20 years or any age with 25. The supplement starts at your MRA, and agencies may add a Voluntary Separation Incentive Payment (VSIP).

Which pathway is right for you?

The right pathway depends on your age, years of service, health coverage needs and finances. No two federal retirements are exactly alike.

Know your eligibility date

Your MRA, years of service and pathway determine not just when you can retire but how much you receive.

Protect your income

The supplement, the pension formula and the MRA+10 penalty interact. One decision can mean thousands of dollars over a lifetime.

Secure your health coverage

The 5-year FEHB rule and the survivor election decide whether you and your spouse keep health insurance in retirement.

Your own numbers, *checked.*

This guide explains the rules. A free benefits review puts your own High-3, service history, TSP balance and retirement date into one plain-language picture with a Federal Retirement Consultant (FRC®), a professional trained on the federal system.

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