

National Active & Retired Federal Employees Association

President's Message

By Pat Meyers

Hello Members! Happy Valentine's Day! The new year is quickly passing. If you were unable to attend our January meeting, you missed not only a terrific presentation by Nate Salisbury of Sunrise Senior Living on Resources for Aging with Alzheimer's and Memory Care Support, but also the delicious mini-Bundt cakes he brought us as a treat. One of the program highlights was his discussion about the national agreement that Sunrise has with NARFE to provide discounts for NARFE members. This includes 5% off the Daily Room Rate in Assisted Living and Memory Care and a flat \$2000.00 move-in community fee. Members considering Sunrise may contact Mr. Salisbury at ***Nathan.Salisbury@sunriseseniorliving.com*** or at ***571-524-7852***.

The NARFE NewsLine sent by e-mail on January 19th provides NARFE President Shackelford's letter to President Biden requesting administration support for specific policies in its fiscal year 2024 budget request to Congress. Specifically, these priorities include:

1. Protect federal retirement and health benefits.
2. Adequate funding for OPM's Retirement Services Division.
3. Support a market rate federal pay increase for 2024.
4. Support repeal and/or reform of the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Governmental Pension Offset (GPO).
5. Support full COLAs for Federal Employee Retirement System (FERS) retirees.

I encourage you to read President Shackelford's letter in its entirety if you haven't already done so. It provides supplemental facts and analysis of NARFE's positions in these five areas. Please also see Ed Weiler's legislative article in this newsletter concerning the reintroduction of the bill to repeal WEP and GPO in the House of Representatives.

It's not too early to think of supporting our NARFE objectives above. March is National PAC month. If you wish to contribute to NARFE PAC, forms will be available at the February and March meetings. More about PAC in the next newsletter.

Hope to see you at the meeting on February 8th.

Meeting Place and Time

Our meetings are held at the Lubber Run Community Center, 300 N. Park Drive, Arlington. There is a parking garage on Park Drive--easy in and out. Take ticket on the way in and scan on the way out. We have free parking up to 4 hours. As you enter the center from the garage, the Beech Room is across the hall just to your left. Social time will begin at 12:00 noon and our program will begin at 12:30 pm.

February 8 Meeting – “Building an Age Friendly Community” – The Arlington Age-Friendly Plan

By Norbert Erickson

In May 2018 Arlington was accepted into the AARP/World Health Organization network of Age Friendly Communities. The Commission on Aging spent the time between 2018 and 2020 to identify key areas of focus to make Arlington even more Age Friendly. The Arlington Age Friendly Plan “Building An Age Friendly Community” is the result of this two years of effort by the Arlington County Commission on Aging, the Age Friendly Task Force and the staff of Arlington’s Aging and Disability Services Division.

The speaker for our February 8 meeting is Dr. Cynthia Davis, Chair of the Arlington Age-Friendly Task Force of the Arlington Commission on Aging. In that role, she helps to guide the process for development and implementation of the Arlington Age Friendly Plan which acts as a strategic plan for the Commission on Aging.

Before retiring in 2016, Dr. Davis was Dean of the Undergraduate School at University of Maryland University College (UMUC), now University of Maryland Global Campus (UMGC). She spent 18 years at UMUC, beginning as Assistant Dean for Humanities and then Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. Previously, she was an English professor and then a manager for several nonprofit associations including the American Association of University Women, Business and Professional Women, and the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals. Dr. Davis received a Master’s and PhD in English from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a B.A. from the University of Texas-Austin. She has lived in Arlington since 1979.

Legislative Corner

By Ed Weiler

WEP-GPO Repeal (HR 82) Reintroduced in the 118th Congress

It’s a new year, and a new Congress, but the same old bill (even bearing the same number it carried previously) was given a new life in the 118th Congress by Rep. Garret Graves (R-LA-6) on 1/9/23. So far, the bill has garnered 54 co-sponsors (37 D; 17 R) from 25 states, although only two from Virginia: Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-VA-11), and Rep. Abigail Spanberger (D-VA-7). For his part, NARFE President Bill Shackelford sent a letter to President Biden (1/13/23) requesting that the Administration support several policies in its upcoming budget request to Congress, including “repeal or reform” of the WEP-GPO provisions. Shackelford’s request also included a pointed reminder that Biden had explicitly pledged support for WEP-GPO repeal in his response to NARFE’s written questions submitted to Presidential candidates during the 2020 Presidential election.

As noted in this space back in January, should the “old” HR82 fail in the 117th Congress (which it did, ultimately), there was good reason to think that WEP-GPO repeal could have legs within a broader effort to restructure Social Security in the face of a looming shortfall in Program benefits. While there is still good reason to think that the road to WEP-GPO repeal runs through Social Security reform, this route is decidedly more perilous in today’s Congress than it was during the 117th. A recent interview of Boston University economist, Laurence Kotlikoff, appearing in *Government Executive* (online version, 1/18/23) encapsulates the political and economic crucible contexts within which Social Security reform (and by extension, WEP-GPO repeal) might play out during the 118th:

Gov. Exec: “*The Democrats still have control of the Senate and the White House, so the common wisdom is the most strident Republican agenda is unlikely to be enacted. But--again—with the debt ceiling and other key bills held hostage—might the Democrats have to compromise?*”

Kotlikoff: “*...The pressure is on for both sides to do something. The Democrats, you know, might really seek a deal here at some point soon.* (continued on p. 3)

They don't want to look like they didn't show up on Social Security issues. We are, after all, just a decade or so from when, you know, somebody's going to have to just say, 'Hey guys, we don't have enough money to pay benefits.' That's a big, multi-trillion-dollar crisis up ahead, if the problem isn't addressed."

Perhaps it was the flashing amber light referenced by Kotlikoff that lay behind President Shackelford's "repeal or reform" request in his letter to President Biden? In Shackelford's words: "...to the extent that full repeal is unfeasible (*sic*), NARFE is supportive of efforts to provide some relief to those affected by the GPO and the WEP, as it would represent an improvement over the status quo. "Whatever the case, the most urgent task before us presently is to round up as many *HR 82* co-sponsors as possible. Drop everything and go to the "Advocacy" page on NARFE's website as soon as possible. Then click on "Take Action," and follow the prompts.

General Accountability Office (GAO) Dings OPM for Failure to Verify Eligibility for FEHBP Coverage

According to a recent GAO Report (GAO-23-105222, Dec. 2022), OPM does not have an adequate system in place to ensure that all participants in the FEHBP are in fact eligible for coverage under the Program. Although OPM issued guidance to Federal Agencies back in 2021, these Agencies are not *required* to monitor for eligibility. Moreover, OPM does not check to see if the Agencies are in compliance with such guidance.

Over the past several years, some members of Congress have sought to reduce the 70 percent slice it pays toward our FEHBP premiums. Failure to monitor for eligibility could well serve to put more bullets in their hands.

Alzheimer's Report

By Nancy Palmerino

Thanks to all who donated to Alzheimer's research through NARFE last year. We collected over \$800 at our chapter meetings and luncheons. This was in addition to the non-monetary contributions made by several of our members. Our hope is that we can raise at least \$1,000 in 2023. We began the year by collecting \$45 in contributions at our January meeting and will continue to have empty piggy banks available for you to fill with change and return at future meetings.

Another way to support Alzheimer's research is through the purchase of the First Class Semipostal stamp available online through the Postal Store. Go to usps.com and enter *Alzheimer* in the search box, click on Search, then click on the picture of the stamp to order. The cost of each stamp is \$.75, with a book of 20 stamps costing \$15. The monies collected above the regular first-class rate (now \$.63) will go to Alzheimer's research.

Membership Report

By Nancy Palmerino

We are saddened to report the passing of longtime member Richard A. Barr, and offer our condolences to his family. We currently have 300 Chapter members and an additional 455 National members in our chapter area for a total of 755 Chapter and National members.

Area Chapter Meetings

The Virginia Federation of NARFE (VFN) website contains a wealth of information about its Board of Directors, Program Chairs and Chapters. Go to vanarfe.org and click on Resources/Newsletters to learn about other chapter meetings in our area.

Upcoming Events

March 8 – Chapter 7 Meeting

March – NARFE PAC Month

April 3 – 5 VFN Annual Meeting & Conference, Hampton Convention Center, Hampton, Virginia

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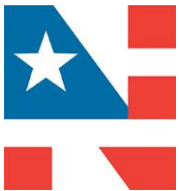
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