

January 2023



MANASSAS CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

NARFE Chapter 356, Manassas, VA - Organized September 9, 1953

Email: narfe356@hotmail.com

Next Meeting Date

January 18

*Hibachi Buffet & Sushi
Grill at
8121 Sudley Road,
Manassas, VA*

**Buffet Lunch -
11:30 AM**

**Program at
12:15 PM**

Hibachi Buffet is located in the Westgate Shopping Center, next door to the Barnes and Noble Book Store.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

In case of inclement weather, we will follow the plans for Prince William County schools.

- If schools are closed, the meeting will be canceled.
- If schools are opening late, we will hold our meeting as usual.

Future Meetings:

Chapter luncheon meetings have resumed on the third Wednesday of each month.

Our Executive Committee is now meeting virtually on the first Tuesday

The Basics of Weather Forecasting and Observation

Randy Bass, Meteorologist, Bass Weather Service

Our speaker will provide insight into the basics of weather forecasting and observation and how that is done by meteorologists. He will talk about the kinds of weather we typically experience here in the Northern Virginia area, including why tornadoes are relatively rare and why the rain/snow line is always hard to predict in this area. Finally, he may talk a little about his consulting business and some of the interesting cases he's been involved with in the past. He also plans to provide handouts with helpful information and links to some good weather websites.

Randall Bass has over 30 years of experience in operational weather forecasting, research and forensics in the military, government and private sectors. He is a retired Air Force Weather Officer now working with the FAA along with his weather consulting business. Randall earned his Bachelor's Degree in Meteorology from North Carolina State University and a Master's Degree in Meteorology from Texas A&M University. He is an active member of the American Meteorological Society (AMS). He obtained the Certified Consulting Meteorologist designation from AMS in 2014, one of only about 800 since 1957 to be awarded the certification.

From The Chapter President

The Executive Committee joins me in thanking those members who attended the annual Holiday Party for your presence and for your generosity. The Chapter collected \$190 in food gift cards for SERVE and the raffle of the lovely Christmas centerpiece from the Flower Gallery netted \$110 for the Alzheimer's Fund.

Our first regular chapter meeting of the New Year will be on Wednesday, January 18 (remember we always meet on the third Wednesday of the month, with the option for lunch at 11:30 and a program at 12:15).

Consider starting the New Year by joining us for our monthly luncheon meeting. To answer one member's concerns, yes—please feel free to bring a guest, especially if you know of someone who might be interested in joining the chapter or who wants to learn more about NARFE and our advocacy efforts on behalf of Federal workers and retirees—and no—there are no longer any Covid restrictions in place at the Hibachi. Mask wearing is optional, but if you feel more comfortable, please feel free and comfortable in doing so.

I also would encourage all of our members to get the annual flu shot and the latest Covid booster, if you have not done so already. I read the latest statistics and was saddened to see that only 35% of seniors have received the latest Covid booster. Unfortunately, Covid is still out there and we need to take all of the precautions we can to lessen its impacts. A recently released CDC study showed that the most recent booster is 84% effective at keeping seniors 65 and older from being hospitalized as compared with the unvaccinated and seniors who had received the latest booster had 73% more protection against hospitalization than those who only received two or more doses of the original vaccine. A larger study showed that adults who received the recent booster had 38% additional protection compared with people who only received the original shots.

As you will see in our Legislation Update section, Congress has passed and President Joe Biden has signed into law a \$1.7 trillion omnibus bill that will fund the government through September 2023. President Biden has also issued an Executive Order that will finalize an average 4.6% pay raise for Federal workers, the largest boost in pay in two decades. Retirees in the Civil Service Retirement System should see their January annuities increase by an 8.7% cost of living adjustment, the largest increase in over four

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

decades, while retirees in the Federal Retirement System will receive one percentage point less.

Finally, lets welcome Virginia's own, newly elected Bill Shackelford, who assumes the duties of national President of NARFE in January and let's give a big thank you to Ken Thomas for his leadership as he steps down as NARFE national President with the expiration of his term.

Mary M. Brandt,
Interim President

Legislation Update and News of Note

Expansion of Temporary Job Appointments

On December 1, 2022, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) issued a rule finalizing a proposal first put forward by the Trump administration that will enable federal agencies to appoint employees in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) related jobs for 10 years. OPM said the change would give agencies more flexibility. Previous regulations required agencies to get special permission from OPM to keep any term employee on staff for longer than four years. Two federal employee unions criticized the rule for undermining civil service hiring rules and the benefits provided to regular, career workers. Term employees—who are not considered career personnel—can often be hired outside of the typical competitive process, making it easier for agencies to onboard applicants through the bypassing of normal hurdles. Due to concerns from commenters, OPM said it was limiting the 10-year appointments to only those in STEM positions. Initially, it had also intended to include employees necessary to stand up, operate and close out time-limited federal offices. The agency left the door open to eventually making far more positions eligible for extended appointments.

Source: Government Executive, December 2, 2022

Congress Fails to Pass Legislation Banning Schedule F

Congressional negotiators on December 6 finally revealed a compromise version of the annual National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). The bill passed the House on December 8 with a 330-80 vote and was agreed to by the Senate on December 15; President Joe Biden signed the bill into law on December 23. The legislation failed to include language to ban a provision aimed at blocking Republican-led efforts to strip potentially tens of thousands of federal employees of their civil service protections by creating a new job category outside of the competitive service called Schedule F and requiring agencies to convert federal workers in “policy-related” positions into the new classification, making them effectively at-will employees. Democrats in Congress had passed the Preventing a Patronage System

Act (H.R. 302), which would block the president from reimplementing Schedule F or any new excepted schedule category of workers without advanced congressional approval. The House passed the measure both as a standalone bill and as part of its initial version of the fiscal 2023 National Defense Authorization Act, and Sens. Tim Kaine (D-VA) and Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) pushed for the measure's inclusion in the Senate version of the legislation. Regarding the failure of the NDAA to include this provision NARFE National President Ken Thomas issued the following statement: “NARFE is disappointed that negotiations on the defense authorization bill did not produce language to prevent the return of a Schedule F exception to the merit-based civil service system. . . . Created by executive order in late 2020, Schedule F would have upended the rules ensuring civil servants are hired and fired based on merit, not political affiliation and loyalty or lack thereof. In so doing, it threatened a system that provides continuity of government through changing administrations, preserves institutional knowledge and expertise, and safeguards the rule of law and adherence to the Constitution. The prospect of a return of Schedule F in a future administration remains very much alive. Reports indicate that presidential hopefuls would reinstitute it upon taking office, or at least support the policy. Congress must act in the new year to head off this worrisome potential outcome.”

The Government Executive subsequently reported that that former Trump administration and conservative think tank staffers had continued working on Schedule F all along, with plans to reimplement the initiative immediately upon the election of the next Republican president. The activists had gone so far as to identify 50,000 federal workers who could be immediately moved to Schedule F and then threatened with removal. Former President Donald Trump recently endorsed the plan at a rally and has announced that he will run for President in 2024. A cadre of 14 of the most conservative Republicans had introduced their own measure in July, entitled the Public Service Reform Act, which would make the entire federal workforce at-will employees, strip them of most of the tools available to appeal adverse personnel actions and abolish the Merit Systems Protection Board.

Source: Government Executive, December 7 and 28, 2022; NARFE Daily News Clips, December 8, 2022

Federal Firefighters Fairness Act

The Federal Firefighters Fairness Act was included in the final version of the 2023 National Defense Authorization Act. This presumes that federal workers engaged in fire protection services with at least five years of service who develop any one of a number of serious health conditions, including lung diseases and lung, brain and digestive system cancers, did so due to on-the-job exposure to smoke and other hazardous materials for the purposes of securing workers compensation benefits through the Federal Employees' Compensation Act. Missing from the legislation was a provision that would apply Title 5 of the U.S. Code to Transportation Security Administration em-

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

ployees, providing them full civil service protections and access to the General Schedule pay scale.

Source: NARFE News Clips, December 8, 2022; Government Executive, December 8

2023 Omnibus Bill

On December 23 the House passed by 225-201 the fiscal 2023 omnibus spending package, finally averting a shutdown through September 2023 and setting line-by-line spending levels at every agency in government. The Senate had already passed the legislation on December 22. Congress also passed another one-week stopgap bill—the third of the fiscal year—that was designed to keep agencies open through December 30. The House approved the measure over the objection of nearly all House Republicans, who had hoped to punt on full-year appropriations until January when they will hold a majority. The spending package provides an overall increase to non-defense discretionary spending of about 6% for a total of \$773 billion, while Defense spending is set to soar by 10% to \$858 billion. The legislation will provide supplemental funding of about \$45 billion for Ukraine aid and \$41 billion for disaster relief.

Source: Government Executive, December 23, 2022

Federal Workers to get 4.6 % Pay Raise

President Joe Biden on December 23 issued an Executive Order implementing his plan to provide federal civilian employees with an average 4.6% pay raise in January. As proposed in his fiscal 2023 budget plan last March, the raise provides federal workers with a 4.1% across-the-board raise to basic pay, as well as an average 0.5% increase in locality pay. The 4.6% figure marks the largest pay increase for federal workers since 2002, when the George W. Bush administration provided them with the same percentage increase. But with year-over-year inflation over 7% as of November and federal workers' share of insurance premiums through the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program growing by an average of 8.7% next year, federal employee groups had hoped for a more generous pay increase of 5.1% as proposed by Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-VA) and other Democratic lawmakers. Despite their lobbying efforts, neither the House nor Senate opted to override the president's pay raise proposal in their appropriations packages for fiscal 2023, effectively endorsing Biden's plan. The 4.6% raise marks an increase over the 2.7% average pay boost federal workers received in 2022.

Source: Government Executive, December 23, 2022

House Committee on Oversight and Reform

Rep. Jamie Raskin, (D-MD) will be the Ranking Member on the House Oversight and Reform Committee in the next Congress, which serves as the main investigative body in the House and oversees civil service is-

sues. After the current chair lost her primary race, Reps. Gerry Connolly (D-VA) and Stephen Lynch (D-MA), chairs of the committee's government operations and national security panels, respectively, as well as Raskin, announced they were vying for the top Democratic position. Raskin beat Connolly 133-75, according to news reports. Raskin will now serve as a counterweight to incoming committee chair, Rep. James Comer (R-KY), who has plans to conduct extensive oversight of the Biden administration.

Source: Government Executive, December 23, 2022

NARFE WEBINARS

Upcoming NARFE Webinars:

No new webinars have yet been announced.

Recent Webinars:

Estate Planning: Strategies for Feds

Wednesday, December 14

"Estate planning" may sound like it's just for the wealthy, but it's not. An effective estate plan specifies not only what happens upon your death, but also what happens if you're incapacitated. It helps avoid messy legal battles and ensures state law doesn't dictate who takes care of you and who gets your money. Whether you're a current federal employee or a retiree, Mark Keen, CFP, will show you how to build an effective estate plan that specifically addresses your federal benefits. Smart estate planning helps protect your family and keep your heirs from overpaying taxes. Let NARFE help you put a structure in place to deal with incapacity and make sure your assets go to your beneficiaries in the most effective way possible.

[Click here](#) to find links to dozens of valuable, expert-led presentations that you can watch on demand, anytime, anywhere. And remember, this is just one of many exclusive NARFE resources available to help you get the most out of your federal benefits, and one of the many reasons it pays to be a NARFE member.

Previous Chapter Meeting, December 21st

Chapter 356 held its annual Christmas/Holiday party with 11 members and guests present. A floral arrangement from the Flower Gallery of Manassas was raffled off and garnered \$110 for the Alzheimer's Fund. Grocery gift cards in an amount totaling \$190 were collected for SERVE.

A short business meeting was conducted with officer and committee reports. The Minutes of the November chapter meeting, as they appeared in the Newsletter, were approved and the Treasurer's Report was accepted. The members were advised of the passing of President Joseph Powell in November and Interim President Brandt noted that she and former President Jack Shipley had represented the chapter at his funeral services in Frederick, MD.

NARFE national records indicate that the chapter currently has 133 members, although it was noted this did not include the passing of Joe Powell. Interim President Brandt noted that chapter membership has remained fairly constant ranging between 130 and 135 members for some time. She also reported that the 2023 National Defense Authorization Act has passed both Houses of Congress, but failed to address the creation of a new job category outside of the competitive service called Schedule F, which would require agencies to convert federal workers in "policy-related" positions into the new classification, making them effectively at-will employees. Congress has passed an Omnibus Bill funding the government through September 2023, and the President is expected to sign the bill into law before the current continuing resolution expires on December 23.

Interim President Brandt reminded members that the deadline to file a claim for damages under the OPM settlement agreement for data breaches that occurred in 2014 and 2015 is December 23 and that anyone who had a security clearance processed by OPM may be eligible to recover at a minimum \$600 or possibly the amount incurred for remedial action, such as the purchase of identity theft insurance.

The next regular monthly meeting of Chapter 356 will be held on Wednesday, January 18 at the Hibachi Buffet and Sushi Grill. The Executive Committee plans to continue monthly meetings for Chapter 356 at least through June of this year.

Mary M. Brandt
Secretary



Centerpiece raffled at Christmas/Holiday Luncheon garnering \$110 for the NARFE Alzheimer's Fund

Happy New Year
2023

Alzheimer's Corner
Marilyn Markman, RN

Finally 2023 has arrived! I think we are all looking forward to a good year.

There is a lot going on in the world of Alzheimer's, drug wise. Lecanabmab (early onset) is hoping for FDA approval this month. MINDFUL (for mild) is starting phase 2 of testing and Mastinib (for mild to moderate) is in phase 3.

So, what are all these phases? The Alzheimer's Association explains how clinical trials work—"new drugs must successfully complete a three-phase clinical trial process before being approved for use by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), they must perform well enough in each phase to progress to the next one. Preclinical studies in laboratories establish a scientific basis for believing a drug is reasonably safe and may be effective".

Phase I - First stage of human testing typically involves fewer than 100 healthy volunteers to look at the risks and side effects of a drug.

Phase II - A few hundred volunteers who have the condition to be treated are enrolled in a study to provide further information about safety and help to determine the best dosage of a drug. Volunteer numbers are generally too small to provide clear evidence about a treatment's benefit.

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Phase III - Several hundred to thousands of volunteers are enrolled in this phase, often at multiple sites worldwide. They provide the chief evidence for safety and effectiveness that the FDA considers for approval.

Phase IV - The so called post marketing studies. This is often required by the FDA after a drug is approved. During this phase researchers continue to monitor the health of those taking the drug, to gain further insight into long term safety and effectiveness.

So, now I bet you are wondering how one becomes a volunteer and how are placebos being used. Well, "tune" in next month for that information and more.

Meanwhile, please continue to donate to Alzheimer's research through our chapter to help support our chapter's fund-raising goal. Checks should be written out to "NARFE Alzheimer's Research" and in memo write "NARFE Chapter 356". Send checks to:

NARFE Chapter 356
 8818 Cather Ave.
 Manassas, VA 20110-6104

Could 2023 be the year of the big breakthrough? Let's hope so!

Chapter 356 Membership Report for December 2022

1 reinstatement
 1 dropped for nonrenewal

Chapter 356 membership as of December 31 is 131 members.

CHAPTER 356 OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES

President (Interim)	Mary Brandt	703-753-3954
Vice President	Priscilla Saboe	703-361-1150
Secretary	Mary Brandt	703-753-3954
Treasurer	Richard Horte	703-368-8767
Membership Comm.	Helen Brooks	703-791-6737
National Legislation	Vacant	
Program Comm.	Vacant	
Public Relations Comm.	Vacant	
Service Officer	Priscilla Saboe	703-361-1150
Sunshine Comm.	Priscilla Saboe	703-361-1150
Alzheimer's Comm.	Marilyn Markman, RN	703-791-4329
Chapter Chaplain	Vacant	
Newsletter Editor	Richard Horte	703-368-8767

Email Address Changes

Notify NARFE or our chapter whenever you change your email address to continue to receive this newsletter.

Manassas Chapter Newsletter Online

We are using the NARFE email system to distribute our newsletter to members. If you are not receiving NARFE email, please contact us or NARFE Headquarters at Member Services (703-838-7760). The latest newsletter is also available at the Virginia Federation website at www.vanarfe.org/newsletters/. Scroll down to Current Chapter Newsletters, Area IX, Chapter 356.