

February 2023



MANASSAS CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

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

Email: narfe356@hotmail.com

**Next Meeting Date
February 15**

*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

“Did You Know?” Interesting Stories About Prince William County History, *Don Wilson, Virginia Librarian, Ruth E. Lloyd Information Center (RELIC), Prince William Library*

Our speaker will provide a fascinating insight into some of the unusual and often little-known stories about the rich 400-year history of this county where we live. RELIC, a resource of Prince William Library, offers a variety of historical materials for the study of Prince William County persons, places, and events.

Don Wilson, a native of Indiana, has a master’s degree in library science from Indiana University, and is an Air Force veteran. He has led the local history and genealogy department of Prince William Public Libraries since 1979. He has researched his own family history since age ten. Over the years he has also been involved in archaeology and community theatre.

From The Chapter President

Welcome to 2023! When January comes around, we frequently adopt those optimistic New Year’s resolutions to streamline or otherwise make improvements in our lives. But by the time February rolls around those well-founded intentions have frequently gone by the wayside. One task I would recommend undertaking, however, is to update NARFE Form 100, “Be Prepared for Life Events.” This handy guide helps organize personal and financial information in one location so survivors will have the information they need to handle affairs upon death. You should ensure that your family members review this guide with you and know where it is located and since it contains private and personally identifiable information make sure to keep it in a secure location. A copy of this form can be found on the NARFE website (www.narfe.org)—go to the NARFE Home Page and click on the Member Quick Links at the top. The

form can be accessed under the Federal Benefits Institute link or under the Forms link. You can download the form or fill it out on line and save it as a PDF file. Perhaps you were not aware of this valuable resource or, if you are like me, you haven’t thought to update the Form in a while—remember you may have opened or closed bank accounts, changed credit cards or have other financial resources that have changed over time. (I recently had to close my safety deposit box when the branch I was using closed, but I didn’t think to amend my Form 100 to this effect.) I just learned that the form itself was just updated in April of last year; so, take a look. I think you will find it to be a very useful resource.

Another valuable resource you have available to you as a chapter member, as opposed to being a national only member, is the ability to enlist the help of our Chapter Service Officer, Priscilla Saboe. (Priscilla has graciously volunteered to take on this task in addition to the duties of Vice President, Sunshine Chair and Acting Program Chair, for which we are grateful.) Priscilla worked for the Social Security Administration and has a wealth of knowledge. She is available to chapter members to provide assistance and information on federal civilian benefits issues, including civil service retirement matters, survivors’ benefits, Social Security and federal insurance programs, including the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program, the Federal Employees Group Life Insurance Program and Medicare. Priscilla can assist chapter members who may be having difficulty trying to contact federal agencies, especially the Office of Personnel Management. She can advise survivors on steps that need to be taken upon the death of

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an annuitant or what to do when a retiree's spouse dies. I would encourage you to come to our monthly luncheon meetings and introduce yourself to Priscilla. As one of our Virginia Federation colleagues recently commented, our chapter service officer holds one of the most important positions in NARFE.

Mary M. Brandt,
Interim President

Legislation Update and News of Note

House to Revive Holman Rule to Allow Cuts to Specific Agencies and Employees

As part of a rules package governing the 118th Congress, House Republicans plan to allow individual lawmakers to reduce the number of federal workers at specific agencies or cut their compensation as a provision of or an amendment to an appropriations bill. The legislative policy, known as "the Holman Rule," dates back to the late 19th century and was last revived in 2017. Democrats eliminated the provision when they took control of the House in 2019. The rule also allows lawmakers to target specific federal programs or offices. Conservative House lawmakers have suggested they will use the authority to go after agencies like the FBI or to zero-out funding for specific federal investigations. The rule does not allow for broad-ranging firing authorities; cuts must be aimed at specific entities and cannot be contingent on future events. The rule will allow lawmakers to slash the workforce or compensation for employees only at the agencies covered by the specific spending bill in which the provision or amendment is included. However, application of the Holman Rule could prove difficult, with Democrats retaining control of the Senate. If the House were able to adopt any amendments using the provision, however, it could complicate passage of the appropriations bills necessary to keep agencies open. Rep. Gerald Connolly (D-VA) pledged that "House Democrats will stand up for our brave, professional and experienced federal employees and oppose GOP efforts to throw us back into a patronage system." House Republicans also intend to adopt another part of their rules package, which suggests agencies set oversight plans that "may make recommendations to consolidate or terminate duplicative or unnecessary programs and agencies."

Source: Government Executive, January 3, 2023

Changes to the TSP

As part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act for 2023, Congress passed into law the Secure 2.0 Act, a retirement savings reform bill, that will make several changes to retirement financial programs, including those for required minimum distributions (RMD) and catch-up contributions. The initial RMD age shifts from age 72 to 75 over a 10-year period. The legislation raises the current age 72 distribution requirement to 73 starting on January 1, 2023, and again to age 75 starting January 1, 2033. Starting in 2025, catch-up contributions to 401(k) style retirement accounts would increase to the greater of \$10,000 or 50 percent more than the regular catch-up amount if you are 60, 61, 62 or 63 years of age, with the amount indexed to inflation beginning in 2026. The \$1,000 catch-up limit for IRAs will also be indexed to inflation starting for tax years in 2024 and after.

Source: NARFE NewsLine, January 3, 2023

Windfall Elimination Provision and Government Pension Offset

During the first week of the new Congress, Reps. Garret Gravies (R-IA) and Abigail Spanberger (D-VA) reintroduced the Social Security Fairness Act, [H.R. 82](#), which would fully repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO). In the 117th Congress, the bill gathered 305 cosponsors, but failed to pass both Houses of Congress. The newly adopted House rules retained the existence of the House Consensus Calendar, which forces either committee action or a floor vote if the bill receives 290 or more cosponsors (and retains that number for 25 legislative days). H.R. 82 currently has 10 cosponsors. On January 23, NARFE National President William "Bill" Shackelford wrote to every returning House member who previously cosponsored H.R. 82 urging their renewed support, noting that "our nation has allowed needless discrimination against public workers for far too long." NARFE requests that you [ask your representative](#) to cosponsor H.R. 82 today.

Source: NARFE NewsLine, January 17 and 24, 2023

Cross Agency Hiring

On January 24, the House of Representatives passed the Chance to Compete Act, [H.R. 159](#), with bipartisan support, 422-2. Re-introduced on January 9 by Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-NC), the NARFE-endorsed bill would improve cross-agency hiring by allowing agencies to share assessments with other agencies, expand use of subject matter experts in the hiring process, and shift focus on a candidate's relevant experience and skillset over self-ratings and degrees. By improving the candidate evaluation process, the government should be able to increase hiring efficiency, ensuring agencies are able to recruit the employees needed for success.

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Last Congress, the same bill had also gathered bipartisan support and passed the House. The Senate version of the bill was approved by Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs on a bipartisan basis. While both versions were similar, the two chambers were unable to pass a final version by the end of the year. But progress from last Congress is continuing through the start of the new one.

Source: NARFE NewsLine, January 31, 2023

Failure to Raise the Debt Ceiling Impacts the TSP G Fund

On January 19, the outstanding debt of the United States reached its statutory debt limit, which currently stands at \$31.4 trillion. The Treasury Department announced it would use “extraordinary measures” to continue obligatory government funding. These measures include divesting in the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) “G Fund.” In disinvestment, the Treasury in effect takes the G fund off the government’s books as debt owed, freeing up an equivalent amount of money. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said she was taking these steps, as well as maneuvers involving the civil service retirement fund and others, to “temporarily provide additional capacity for Treasury to continue financing the operations of the federal government.” During a disinvestment period, G fund account balances continue to accrue earnings and are updated each business day, and loans and withdrawals are unaffected; after the debt limit impasse has ended, the G fund is made whole. As of the end of November, the G fund held nearly \$300 billion of TSP investor assets, about 40 percent of the total. Although the maneuvers are officially termed “extraordinary measures” they have been used about a dozen times over the last 25 years by administrations of both parties in similar situations.

Source: Fed Week, January 24, 2023, as quoted in NARFE NewsLine, January 25, 2023

8.7% Pay Raise Proposed for FY 2024

On January 26, Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-VA) and Sen. Brian Schatz (D-HI) introduced in the House and Senate, respectively, the Federal Adjustment of Income Rates Act, [H.R. 536/S. 124](#), which would provide federal employees with an average 8.7% pay raise in FY 2024, comprised of a basic pay increase of 4.7% and an average 4% increase in locality pay. Although such bills calling for federal pay increases are rarely acted upon, the legislation could serve as an important marker as lawmakers and the Biden administration debate spending levels for FY

2024 as House Republicans demand cuts to government spending. William Shackelford, President of NARFE, endorsed the legislation stating that “The FAIR Act proposes a strong pay raise to counteract a tightening labor market and increasing private-sector pay, rising costs of living and an impending federal retirement wave. A strong pay increase in 2023 (sic) is critical to the recruitment and retention of an effective federal workforce, and we’re thankful to have Congressman Connolly’s support for this effort.”

Source: Government Executive, January 26, 2023

2023 VFN Annual Conference

The Virginia Federation of NARFE will hold its annual conference April 2-5 at the Embassy Suites by Hilton in Hampton, Virginia. The Early Bird registration fee through March 3 is \$70, after which the cost will be \$75 through March 15 and \$85 thereafter. The Federation has set aside a block of rooms for NARFE participants at a cost per night of \$98 for a single/\$108 for a double room suite. Breakfast is included. Registration can be done on-line or the form downloaded at vanarfe.org. Call the hotel directly to make your reservations and ask for the VFN Room Block.

NARFE WEBINARS

Upcoming NARFE Webinars:

NARFE Advocacy in the 118th Congress

Wednesday, February 15 | 2 p.m. ET

Following the 2022 congressional midterm elections, a new Congress – the 118th – took office this year. Republicans took control of the House of Representatives, while Democrats retained control of the Senate. With divided government, fights over raising the debt limit and funding the government loom. What will this mean for federal employees and retirees? What are NARFE’s advocacy priorities for the new Congress, and how will the new dynamic affect them? What can you do to join the fight? Learn what’s in store for NARFE advocacy in the 118th Congress.

[REGISTER TODAY](#)

[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, January 18th

Chapter 356 held its regular monthly meeting, with 14 members and guests present, including Virginia Federation of NARFE Area IX Vice President Jim Little. Guest speaker, Randy Bass, President of Bass Weather Services, gave a presentation on weather basics and fielded questions from the floor on a number of weather related topics.

Mr. Bass, a retired Air Force Weather Officer, noted that he has 34 years' experience as a meteorologist and currently heads the Aviation Weather Division of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), as well as providing consulting services as a Certified Consulting Meteorologist through Bass Weather Services. His work with the FAA involves assessing the impacts of weather on general aviation. One goal is to lessen the time to recognize weather events such as turbulence and icing in order to negate negative effects on commercial aircraft. He is also engaged in new research on space weather, as well as examining the impacts of radar and global positioning satellites. Bass indicated that weather forecasting relies on mathematics and physics and involves using weather models and extrapolation. Using radar data helps assess what is happening in the air to determine what will happen on the ground. Weather forecasting uses balloon soundings and airborne observations to analyze current conditions such as temperature, wind speed and pressure to project future conditions. Bass said that using weather models for short-term forecasts is very successful in helping to determine the exact timing and location of events, but that long-term forecasts are often not as accurate. No weather model is perfect and so meteorologists look at as many models as they can. When forecasting beyond five to nine days, little errors can often become big errors. In the Washington area it is very difficult to determine where the rain/snow line falls, as minor shifts can cause big differences. Even one degree off in temperature readings can have major impacts. The Washington area weather is often affected by the mountains to our west. Bass spoke about the need to have the ability to warn drone operators about weather impacts on their operations. He hopes in the next few years that forecasting will be able to reach down to determining weather impacts on neighborhoods and eventually to assess the impacts on the individual level.

Bass indicated that in his opinion climate change is real and human induced, but personally questioned the impacts of carbon dioxide as the sole cause. He felt that the impacts of deforestation and urbanization have had a

greater impact on weather patterns. In closing, Bass spoke briefly about his private business serving as a weather consultant, primarily in providing expert witness testimony in legal cases, although he noted that 95% of the cases he consults on are settled before they go to court. He gave several examples of cases in which assessing weather conditions at the time of the incidents helped determine the outcome of the cases, specifically in a slip and fall accident case, a food stamp fraud case and even in a case of larceny.

Following the presentation, a short business meeting was conducted, with officer and committee reports. The Minutes of the December 21 chapter meeting, as reported in the Newsletter, were approved, and the Treasurer's Report was adopted. The current chapter membership stands at 130, with one member dropped for non-renewal. With Congress only having just convened the 118th Congress, there was nothing new to report on national legislation, other than the reintroduction of legislation to repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision and the Government Pension Offset (see the Legislation Update on p. 2, for additional details), which are not likely to advance considering the current composition of the House. Alzheimer's Chair Markham spoke briefly on new development relating to the detection and treatment of Alzheimer's. The raffle for the Alzheimer's Fund collected \$25, with the winner donating her share.

The next regular monthly meeting for Chapter 356 is scheduled for February 15 at the Hibachi Buffet. The next Executive Committee meeting will be held via Zoom at 1:00 on February 7, the first Tuesday of the month; all members are welcome to attend the committee meeting and any member wishing to do so should contact one of the chapter officers to obtain the Zoom link.

Mary M. Brandt, Secretary



Randy Bass, President of Bass Weather Services, spoke on weather basics

Alzheimer's Corner
Marilyn Markman, RN

So, you or someone you know would like to become a volunteer for clinical testing. There are a number of ways to do this. Universities, hospitals, governments and of course pharmaceutical companies are always looking for volunteers. Another source is my friend Google- I typed in "How to become a tester for new drugs" and opened up a whole new world! These included from "Clinical trials near you" to "Paid clinical trials for medical research" to "How to volunteer" and "What do I need to start a drug testing business". So, just what is clinical testing?

Clinical trials or studies test potential treatments in humans after being studied in lab animals. A treatment could be a drug, medical device or biologic such as a vaccine, blood products or gene therapy. Treatments having acceptable safety profiles and show most promise are moved to clinical trials. Clinical trials are an integral part of new product discovery and are required by the FDA before the new product can be marketed.

It is important to test medical products on a wide variety of people because drugs can work differently in people of various ages, races, ethnicity and gender. The guidelines or eligibility requirements are developed by the researchers and usually include age, sex, type and stage of disease, previous treatment history and other medical conditions. Some trials involve people with a particular illness or condition and others seek healthy

volunteers.

A trial plan called a protocol maps out what study procedures will be done by whom and why. The clinical trial team includes doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals. The team checks the health of the participant at the beginning to assess if the person is eligible to participate. Those found eligible and agree to participate are given specific instructions and are then monitored and assessed during the trial and after it is completed.

Trials consist of 4 phases as mentioned last month. Phase 2 and Phase 3 generally involve a "control" standard. One group will receive an experimental or test drug while the control group will be given a placebo (an inactive pill, liquid or powder). The groups are randomly chosen and no one on the team knows who received the test drug and who received the placebo. Most trials have a separate independent Data Safety Monitoring Committee that has access to who gets what. Committee members regularly analyze data and step in if they notice any worrisome patterns of serious side effects.

So, who volunteers for clinical trials and why? What are the risks and are the volunteers protected? I will try to have these answers next month.

Meanwhile, the FDA has just approved the drug Leqembi (formally called Lecanemab) for mild impairment of Alzheimer's. As we watch researchers and the FDA work hard and yet carefully to protect us, we must continue to give our support through NARFE so researchers can continue their work.

Chapter 356 Membership Report for January 2023

1 new member
1 dropped for nonrenewal

Welcome to our Chapter
James Shaffer

Chapter 356 membership as of January 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.