

June 2023



# MANASSAS CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

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

Email: narfe356@hotmail.com

## Next Meeting Date

**June 21**

*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.

## Home Building Safety, Dave Hall, Construction Plans Reviewer & Kristin Duff, Construction Inspection Specialist, Prince William County Government

Our luncheon speakers will discuss ways to keep our home and family safe, how to promote building safety in our neighborhood and perhaps how to prepare for emergencies before they happen.

Dave is currently a plan reviewer with the County and had been an inspector. He has been with Building Development since 2016. He reviews mostly plumbing, also some mechanical and gas. With a background in Residential Combination Inspection he also does some residential reviews as well, mostly decks.

Kristin has been in the construction industry for over 30 years. She started with the County as a Commercial Building Inspector 6 years ago and has also spent time as a Building Code Enforcement Officer. Her inspection certifications include Commercial Building, Residential Building, Residential Plumbing, Residential Mechanical and Residential Electrical.

been and will again become the target of Congressional interest when it is in a cost-cutting, reduce the deficit, balance the budget frame of mind, or, as in more recent times, it desires to “drain the swamp” by making it easier to fire federal workers or convert civil servants to at-will employees. There are several ways you can take an active role in protecting your earned pay and benefits. I would urge you to continue your participation in NARFE, renew your membership when it comes due and encourage friends in federal service and former co-workers you may encounter to join NARFE. NARFE membership is open to civilians who are or will be eligible to receive an annuity or survivor annuity from a federal retirement program. This includes: current federal employees; retirees; spouses and surviving spouses of those eligible to join NARFE; former federal employees; and a former spouse who is entitled to a federal survivor annuity. The application form can be found in the monthly NARFE magazine, on the NARFE website, which also has additional recruitment materials available, or by contacting our Membership Chair Helen Brooks. Remember, NARFE is the only organization solely dedicated to protecting and preserving federal retirement benefits through its advocacy on Capitol Hill and also serves as the best source of guidance on federal benefits issues.

Members need to stay apprised of and advocate for current legislation affecting federal workers and retirees. Information on new legislative initiatives can be found in our Chapter Newsletter, the federal legislation bill tracker found each month in the NARFE magazine and the weekly NARFE NewsLine e-mails from headquarters. I would also recommend checking the daily “Government Executive”

*(Continued on page 2)*

## Future Meetings:

**Chapter luncheon meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month.**

**Our Executive Committee is now meeting virtually on the first Tuesday of each month.**

## From The Chapter President

Well thankfully, the President has signed the 2023 Fiscal Responsibility Act into law (see the Legislation Update), the government has not defaulted on its debt and I can sleep more peacefully knowing that my monthly annuity check is safely in the bank, retirement accounts have not cratered and social security benefits are being paid on time to all recipients. Nonetheless, we should not become complacent as Federal workers’ and retirees’ pay and benefits frequently have

(Continued from page 1)

found at [www.govexec.com](http://www.govexec.com) or the Federal News Network at [www.federalnewsnetwork.com](http://www.federalnewsnetwork.com). Become engaged. Registration is still open on NARFE's website ([www.narfe.org](http://www.narfe.org)) for this year's LEGcon23, which will be held virtually June 20-22, with a pre-training session on June 14. After a day and a half of virtual training, the conference culminates with a virtual lobbying day, when you will be able to talk directly to your lawmakers and/or their staff about NARFE issues. Exercise your voice. Use NARFE'S Legislative Action Center found on the NARFE website. This is an easy way to send communications to your legislators on legislation and initiatives impacting federal workers and retirees using already prepared texts. And finally, consider donating to NARFE/PAC, which provides a mechanism for supporting those candidates for Congressional office who support the Federal community and our issues.

Mary M. Brandt,  
Interim President

## Legislation Update and News of Note

### **Making Federal Workers at-will Employees and Abolishing the Merit Service Protection Board**

Lead by Rep. Chip Roy (R-TX) and Sen. Rick Scott (R-FL), 14 conservative lawmakers in both chambers of Congress have reintroduced legislation, the Public Service Reform Act ([H.R. 3115/S.1496](https://www.congress.gov/bills/117/3115)), that would make the federal government an at-will employer and abolish the Merit Systems Protection Board, effectively removing federal workers' civil service protections and discouraging whistleblowing. The legislation would abolish most of the avenues currently available to appeal adverse personnel decisions. It also would dissolve the Merit System Protection Board and send most appeals directly to federal appellate courts, although it preserves a 14-day window for whistleblowers to allege retaliation before the Office of Special Counsel. The bill also allows for federal workers to appeal adverse personnel actions they believe were discriminatory to the Equal

Employment Opportunity Commission, although the legislation requires the Commission to scrap its policies relating to the federal workforce and apply private sector rules to the proceedings. The legislation also creates a disincentive to federal workers filing appeals of their firings through a provision that says that if a court finds a complaint to be "frivolous" or otherwise "brought in bad faith," the employee's defined benefit annuity is automatically reduced by 25%. Congressman Roy previously introduced his bill last July, but with Democrats in control of the House, it languished. With a divided Congress, its chance of passage now remains low; however, the bill has gained support, with the number of initial cosponsors growing from five to 14.

Source: Government Executive, May 11, 2023

### **Revamping Pay and Benefits for Federal Wildland Firefighters**

Rep. Joe Neguse (D-CO) and Sen. Michael Bennet (D-CO) introduced The Tim Hart Wildland Firefighter Classification and Pay Parity Act ([H.R. 3108 S---](https://www.congress.gov/bills/117/3108)) in the both houses of Congress on May 10, which would revamp pay and benefits for federal wildland firefighters, boost pay permanently and provide a new form of overtime pay. The legislation would establish new special pay rates for federal wildland firefighters to ensure that they all make at least \$20 per hour and would establish a new form of overtime pay—incident standby premium pay—to compensate firefighters for all hours they are mobilized to respond to a fire incident. The bill also would provide paid rest and recuperation leave following a deployment to combat wildfires, seven days of mental health leave per year, as well as create a database to track chronic diseases caused by on-the-job exposure to environmental toxins. It would allow federal firefighters to credit years of service under temporary appointments to toward their retirement benefits, as well as include premium pay in calculation of their defined benefit annuity. Previous versions of the bill, named for a smokejumper who died in 2021 fighting a wildfire in New Mexico, failed to pass both chambers of Congress, although elements of the legislation did make their way into law over the past two years. In 2021, the bipartisan infrastructure law created a new job classification series for wildland firefighters, temporary pay raises and new mental health services for federal firefighters. The fiscal 2023 National Defense Authorization Act established the presumption that federal firefighters who develop any one of a number of serious health conditions, including lung diseases, 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.

Source: Government Executive, May 10, 2023

(Continued on page 3)

*(Continued from page 2)*

### **Social Security Reform and Repeal of the WEP and GPO**

On May 23, House Ways and Means Social Security Subcommittee Ranking Member Rep. John Larson (D-CT) introduced Social Security 2100, a comprehensive Social Security reform bill, which includes a host of provisions intended to revitalize and strengthen Social Security benefits, as well as repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO). The bill would extend the Social Security trust fund's solvency, avoiding a looming 20 percent cut to benefits. It also contains provisions to calculate more accurate cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) for seniors and provide a two percent across the board increase to benefits for Social Security beneficiaries. The bill would also increase benefits by an additional five percent for the most elderly, those who have been Social Security recipients for 15 years or more. To help pay for these changes, the legislation would apply the Social Security payroll tax (FICA) to wages above \$400,000 and add an additional 12.4 percent net investment income tax for those making over \$400,000 annually. In a statement, NARFE National President [Bill Shackelford] said, "NARFE thanks Congressman Larson for his diligent protection of Social Security and for his fight to ensure that this crucial program keeps its promises to every American. Our association appreciates the attention this comprehensive bill gives to repealing the Windfall Elimination Provision and Government Pension Offset, so the promise of Social Security can be fully met for our nation's public servants. We have long believed that Social Security should be a benefit that people can depend on, and the Social Security 2100 Act does just that."

Source: NARFE NewsLine, May 30, 2023

### **Raising the Debt Ceiling**

President Joe Biden and House Speaker Kevin McCarthy reached an agreement to raise the federal government's debt limit through January 1, 2025 and set caps on annual government funding levels for the next two years. The bill, the 2023 Fiscal Responsibilities Act, also provides for a 3.3 percent increase in defense spending (up from \$858.4 billion to \$886.3 billion, matching the amount in President Biden's budget) for fiscal year 2024. It would cap non-defense spending that is authorized via annual funding bills at \$703.7 billion, a 5.4 percent cut compared to the current fiscal year (2023). However, according to both sides, there's an unwritten agreement to repurpose unspent COVID-19 relief funds and adjust

amounts dedicated to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to permit the total level for non-defense discretionary spending to remain roughly even to the current year. For fiscal year 2025, annual defense and non-defense spending would increase about 1 percent from the fiscal 2024 level. The bill also provides a mechanism to avoid a government shutdown, allowing for a continuing resolution with 1 percent across the board cuts if lawmakers fail to pass, by the end of the calendar year, the annual funding bills consistent with the budget caps in the bill. Finally, the bill includes additional policy provisions including adjustments to work requirement rules for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and reforms to streamline environmental permitting for energy projects, including expedited approval of all permits needed to complete the Mountain Valley Pipeline. The legislation quashes lawsuits against the Mountain Valley Pipeline, a natural gas pipeline project that spans approximately 303 miles from northwestern West Virginia to southern Virginia and sends any new appeals to the D. C. Circuit rather than the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, which has regional jurisdiction and has blocked permits for the pipeline in the past due to environmental concerns. The House passed the bill by a 314-117 vote on May 31. The Congresspersons representing Northern Virginia voted to pass the legislation, with the exception of Rep. Gerald Connelly (D-VA), who, citing his refusal to enable the dangerous precedent of a deal under duress of defaulting on the government's debt, opposed the legislation noting that he had urged President Joe Biden to invoke the 14<sup>th</sup> amendment to the Constitution. Connelly also opposed the inclusion of provisions relating to the Mountain Valley Pipeline, additional work requirements for SNAP, an increase in the disparity between defense and non-defense spending, and the rescission of billions of dollars in funding already appropriated for the IRS. Connelly also stated that had his vote made the difference in passing the deal and default he would have reluctantly voted for the legislation. The Senate passed the bill late June 1 by a 63-36 vote. Despite his strong opposition to the Mountain Valley Pipeline project, Senator Tim Kaine (D-VA), joined Senator Mark Warner (D-VA) in voting in favor of the legislation. President Joe Biden signed the legislation into law on June 3.

Sources: NARFE NewsLine, May 30, 2023; Gerry Connelly e-mail of June 1, 2023; Government Executive, May 31 and June 1, 2023; Washington Post, June 2, 2023

## NARFE WEBINARS

### Upcoming NARFE Webinars:

#### Debunking Federal Retirement Myths

Wednesday, July 19 | 2 p.m. ET

Many current and retired civil servants wrongly assume that it's impossible to fully understand their federal benefits, let alone select the best options for their situations. To help you better plan for your future, NARFE federal benefits experts Tammy Flanagan and Mark Keen will highlight some of the common myths and misconceptions around the federal retirement process.

This webinar will address the following questions:

- Is there a “best date” to retire?
- Is it better to claim Social Security as soon as possible or wait until the full retirement age or even age 70?
- Is it really a good idea to pay off your mortgage with your TSP balance in the year you retire?
- Since you have health insurance that lasts a lifetime, do you really need to enroll in Medicare Part B?
- Is it better to retire before age 62 if you are eligible for the FERS Special Retirement Supplement?
- Do you need a survivor annuity from your spouse if you have your own retirement benefit?
- Do retirees need to maintain life insurance?
- Do retirees need to have long-term care insurance?

#### [REGISTER NOW](#)

### Recent NARFE Webinars:

#### The Final Countdown to Retirement: Smoothing the Transition

Thursday, June 1, 2023

Tammy Flanagan highlights the importance of retirement preparation and helps you prepare a retirement timeline and checklist. In the webinar, you will learn:

- The important age and service requirements that must be met to qualify for immediate, unreduced retirement benefits, and how this is different than simply being vested;
- How to know if all of your federal service is creditable towards retirement and the computation used to determine your retirement benefit;
- Benefits your spouse or former spouse may be eligible for or entitled to;
- The requirements and benefits of continuing your FEHB, FEGLI, and other insurance coverage into retirement;
- The best time to “turn on” your TSP distributions and your Social Security retirement benefit;
- Why it may be important for FERS employees to consider waiting until age 62 to retire.

#### Mid-Career Reality Check: Golden Handcuffs or a Move to the Private Sector?

Wednesday, May 17, 2023

Federal benefits expert Tammy Flanagan walks you through what you should know and what you should consider if you're thinking about leaving federal service, including:

- The age and service requirements that you need to qualify for retirement, and how to weigh the benefit of accruing eligibility
- How to compare the value of your federal compensation package (both salary and the benefits) to the value of the private sector compensation package
- How to estimate future retirement benefits – and how to preserve records helpful to collecting them – if you leave
- What alternatives exist to leaving federal service

[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, May 17th

Chapter 356 held its regular monthly meeting, with 11 members and guests present. Guest speaker, Rick Reo, Certified Master Gardener with the Virginia Cooperative Extension Office of Prince William County, gave a presentation on gardening and lawn maintenance and took a number of questions from members.

Mr. Reo is a volunteer with the Virginia Cooperative Extension Office of Prince William County, which advocates using best practices in lawn maintenance and gardening and provides help to county residents in analyzing various homeowners' problems relating to plant disease, pest control, and lawn maintenance. Reo urged members to take advantage of the Extension Office's help desk on 703-792-7747 or contacting [mastergardener@pwcgov.org](mailto:mastergardener@pwcgov.org) to address individual problems or concerns. You may also find helpful tips and information on education programs and workshops at [www.pwcgov.org/grow](http://www.pwcgov.org/grow) or [www.ext.vt.edu](http://www.ext.vt.edu). Reo noted that the soil in Prince William County is good, although it tends to have a lot of clay and rocks. He advised adding compost to improve the soil, but to avoid using a lot of fertilizer, which runs off and pollutes the watershed. He recommended doing a lawn soil test to determine acidity, which can be obtained for a \$10 fee and returned to Virginia Tech for analysis. The Extension Office also has a best lawns program, where for a \$40 charge a Master Gardener will visit your home and help analyze issues related to your property, such as identifying weeds and insects, as well as take a soil sample test. Reo recommended a balance between planting native and non-native plants, although he noted that native plants provide a habitat for pollinators and native animal species and also require less water, while non-native plants can become invasive and reduce the native plant population. Fall is the best time to address lawn improvements, fertilization, aeration and addressing weed infestation. Fall is also the best time to plant trees and shrubs. He advised watering in the early morning, hitting the soil to moisten the plant roots, not their leaves, and if using mulch, said to do so sparingly. Reo also gave advice on tree pruning. He suggested members

visit "The Teaching Garden," an education site maintained by the Master Gardeners of Prince William, which is located on the grounds of the Benedictine Monastery at 9535 Linton Hall Road in Bristow and demonstrates low maintenance gardening techniques that homeowners can implement in their own gardens.

A short business meeting was conducted after the presentation, with officers and committee reports. The Minutes of the April 19 chapter meeting, as reported in the Newsletter, were approved. The current chapter membership stands at 129. Interim President Brandt referred members to the Newsletter for information on national legislation and noted that next month's Newsletter would report on legislation that has been introduced to make Federal workers at-will employees and abolish the Merit System Protection Board and legislation that would revamp pay and benefits for Federal wildland firefighters. She also encouraged members to exercise their right to vote in the election for officers of the Virginia Federation of NARFE, which can be done on the Federation's website ([www.vanarfe.org](http://www.vanarfe.org)). Donations in the amount of \$20 were collected for the Alzheimer's Fund.

The next regular monthly meeting for Chapter 356 is scheduled for June 21 at the Hibachi Buffet. The next Executive Committee meeting will be held via Zoom at 1:00 on June 6, 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

**Alzheimer's Corner**  
*Marilyn Markman, RN*

Most diseases/conditions have progressions or stages. This is helpful to you and your family because you pretty much know what will be happening. Alzheimer's as we well know is not like most diseases. It is a very "individual" disease. I receive emails from Alzheimer's Today and in March the subject was "Navigating 6 Difficult Behaviors," written by Lynn Wood, which I would like to share with you.

Managing difficult behavior begins with understanding the triggers and needs of the loved one. Dementia patients transition into "visual learners." They watch the caregivers for visual clues on how to react or respond to their environment. In talking about behavior, caregivers need to start with themselves. They reflect their state of mind, be it angry or nervous or patient and relaxed. The patient will use these emotions as a guide and will respond and often mirror their demeanor.

Difficult behavior may be due to a lack of visual signs when the patient is trying to communicate their need - hungry, thirsty, need bathroom, or in pain - taking care of the needs and the behavior may cease. Also the caregiver should ask what happened prior to the behavior - were there any "triggers".

The following are some common behaviors and suggestions on how to handle them.

1. Rummaging through things-may be due to boredom, fear or anxiety. If possible, give them a place to freely sort things - use it as an activity for hand-eye coordination.
2. Wandering-some reasons are attempt to go home,

feeling uncomfortable - too hot or cold, too stimulated - need to flee. Ask questions to gain as much information to give an appropriate response or activity to redirect their mind.

3. Hallucinations are a sensory experience and occur in at least half of all cases. Do not try to explain reality, instead state that you understand their distress and be present through it. Keep the environment simple and increasing lighting may help eliminate distractions.

4. Shadowing - following caregivers may represent insecurity- "If I am out of your sight will you forget I need you?" Following may give a feeling of safety, giving a small task to do may give the caregiver some "alone time".

5. Repetitive questioning due to short memory. Asking questions multiple times is common and expected. Give the answer they are looking for as many times as needed. Try to distract or redirect.

6. Paranoia is linked to memory loss and can worsen as a person's memory dissipates. Try not to react if blamed for something. Do not argue - the ability to reason is lost. Validate the feeling that something is missing, help with the search. Keep original and important pieces in a safe place.

Caregiving is challenging, and difficult behavior can be time-consuming and frustrating. Before trying to stop a behavior, ask " Does it matter?" If it is not harmful try to adapt and redirect.

Reminder - June 21 is the longest day with the most light - the summer solstice. People across the world will fight the darkness of Alzheimer's through fund-raising activities.

Also remember the hard working researchers trying to "lighten" the days by donating through NARFE.

**Chapter 356 Membership Report for May 2023**

2 new members

*Welcome to our Chapter*

Rick Karas  
Joseph Sharon

*Chapter 356 membership as of May 31 is 131 members.*

**CHAPTER 356 OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES**

<b>President (Interim)</b>	Mary Brandt	703-753-3954
<b>Vice President</b>	Priscilla Saboe	703-361-1150
<b>Secretary</b>	Mary Brandt	703-753-3954
<b>Treasurer</b>	Richard Horte	703-368-8767
<b>Membership Comm.</b>	Helen Brooks	703-791-6737
<b>National Legislation</b>	Vacant	
<b>Program Comm.</b>	Vacant	
<b>Service Officer</b>	Priscilla Saboe	703-361-1150
<b>Sunshine Comm.</b>	Priscilla Saboe	703-361-1150
<b>Alzheimer's Comm.</b>	Marilyn Markman, RN	703-791-4329
<b>Chapter Chaplain</b>	Vacant	
<b>Newsletter Editor</b>	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/](http://www.vanarfe.org/newsletters/). Scroll down to Current Chapter Newsletters, Area IX, Chapter 356.