

July 2023



MANASSAS CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

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

Email: narfe356@hotmail.com

Next Meeting Date

July 19

*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.

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.

Plastic Film Recycling, *Emily Whitacre, Materials Coordinator, Trex Company*

Ever wonder what happens to all those plastic bags you return to the grocery store? Our luncheon speaker can answer that for you. Since 1996, Trex Company in Winchester, Virginia has invented, defined and perfected the composite deck category, becoming the world's largest manufacturer of wood-alternative decking products. Trex Company turns millions of pounds of recycled and reclaimed plastic film and waste wood each year into composite decking products. These raw materials come from recovered plastic grocery bags, plastic film and waste wood fiber. Trex recycles 300-400 million pounds of polyethylene film annually.

Emily Whitacre is the Materials Sourcing & Promotions Coordinator for Trex. Her responsibilities include organizing and coordinating all of the recycling programs for the company including the school and community programs. She has been with Trex for 12 years.

conference September 12-14 at the Capital Plaza Hotel in Frankfort, KY. Registration closes August 1; the fee is \$60 for registration, which includes lunch Tuesday and Wednesday, and the hotel rate is \$119/night plus tax. NARFE President Bill Shackelford will be the featured speaker. If interested, contact me for the registration form and further details.

Please join me in extending congratulations to Frances Boatman, who was elected President of the Virginia Federation of NARFE (VFN), and to Deborah Fisk, who was elected VFN Secretary during the recent runoff election. At the VFN annual conference held in April, Joseph (Larry) McIlwee was elected by acclamation as First Vice President and Patricia Wolfe was elected by acclamation as Second Vice President. Since no one volunteered to serve as VFN Treasurer, the current Treasurer, Tom Rachele, has volunteered to stay in office.

From The Chapter President

Happy Fourth of July! Let's pause a moment to reflect as our country celebrates 247 years of independence and the important role government workers play in preserving and advancing our democratic principles. A reminder—NARFE Region X (comprised of members in Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky and Tennessee) is holding its biennial

We continue to encourage our members, especially those who are new to the Chapter, to join us for our monthly luncheon meeting on the third Wednesday of the month at the Hibachi Buffet and Sushi Grill, starting at 11:30. We are now offering new members a one-time only free lunch! Note that the Hibachi is under new management and, depending upon who is at the front desk, we are not always able to pay for

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our lunch in advance, as had been past practice. If this is the case, please remember to pay at the front desk before leaving the restaurant. Not interested in eating—no problem; come hear our speaker, meet other members and learn about NARFE-related news. We have had interesting inter-active programs recently on the Freedom Museum in Downtown Manassas from its current President, on landscaping, lawn maintenance, gardening and pruning from a Prince William Master Gardner, and on home safety and permitting issues from two Prince William County Government Inspection Specialists. This month we are looking forward to hearing from Emily Whitacre with Trex Company. If you have any topics you would like us to explore or speakers you might recommend, please contact me or our Acting Program Chair, Priscilla Saboe. We are open to and welcome suggestions.

Mary M. Brandt
Interim President

Legislation Update and News of Note

Repeal of the WEP and GPO—UPDATE

The Social Security Fairness Act (H.R. 82/S. 597), which would repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO), has gained 280 cosponsors as of June 12 and needs only 10 additional cosponsors to move it forward. NARFE is encouraging its members to facilitate this effort by [clicking here to urge your lawmaker to cosponsor H.R. 82/ S. 97 and finally repeal the WEP and the GPO.](#)

Source: NARFE NewsLine, June 13, 2023

New Legislation to Reform the WEP and GPO

The Public Servants Protection and Fairness Act (H.R. 4260) has been reintroduced in the House of Representatives by Ranking Member of the Ways

and Means Committee, Rep. Richard Neal (D-MA). This latest iteration of WEP reform would grant relief to current WEP-affected individuals by providing them with an extra \$150 a month and instituting a new WEP formula for future retirees. Current WEP-affected Social Security beneficiaries and those turning 62 before 2025 would receive an extra \$150 a month, starting nine months after enactment and continuing for as long as those individuals are eligible to receive Social Security benefits. The relief amount cannot exceed the size of each person's current WEP reduction. Future retirees will be eligible for a new formula, called the Public Servant Protection (PSP) formula. The PSP formula would calculate a benefit amount based on the proportion of lifetime earnings covered by Social Security. The legislation stipulates that future retirees will receive the higher benefit of the two formulas, protecting individuals from being worse off under the new PSP formula. H.R. 4260 also maintains the current WEP exemptions for those who have 30 or more years of Social Security covered employment or if they do not receive any pension from their public employment.

Source: NARFE NewsLine, June 27, 2023

FY 2024 Conservative Budget Proposal Targets Federal Workers and Retirees

A group of more than 150 House conservatives, who comprise the Republican Study Committee, led by Rep. Kevin Hern (R-OK), released its FY 2024 budget plan ("Protecting America's Economic Security") on June 14, with a goal of balancing the federal budget in seven years. Many of their ideas would have a direct impact on federal workers and retirees. The study committee advocates for the end of automatic across-the-board raises in favor of targeted "merit-based" pay increases, as well as reducing federal workers' access to paid leave to more closely "match" private employers. Taken together, these two changes would cut spending by \$132 billion over the next decade the group said. The plan would eliminate the General Schedule. Under the committee's proposal, federal retirees' annuity benefits would be calculated using the average of the highest five years of an employee's salary, instead of the current high three, increasing the

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amount federal workers must contribute from their paychecks toward the Federal Employee Retirement System (FERS), and “reducing or eliminating” federal retirees’ annual cost of living adjustment for both FERS and Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) annuitants.

The plan also calls for the elimination of the FERS supplement for federal employees who retire before Social Security kicks in at age 62, and would base the returns of the Thrift Savings Plan’s government securities (G) fund on the yield of the short-term Treasury bill. (TSP officials have previously said that such a move would make the portfolio “virtually worthless.”) The plan also proposes eliminating FERS for new hires, allowing them to participate only in the TSP, a move proponents say would save \$235 billion over 10 years. And a 2012 measure requiring federal employees to contribute more toward their FERS annuity each paycheck, originally targeted only at those hired after its enactment, would apply to all federal workers.

The group calls for the Federal Employees Health Benefits program (FEHBP) to shift from agencies contributing a percentage of a federal workers’ health care premiums to a “premium support system,” where the government would pay a flat sum toward premiums, and federal workers would be responsible for whatever is left over. In theory, federal workers would then choose less expensive plans, saving agencies money. The budget plan also would end the practice of FEHBP continuing to offer coverage to federal retirees, although that change would only affect new hires.

The conservative group also targeted federal workforce’s civil service and union protections. The plan endorses legislation that would reduce the firing process to 30 days and limit federal employees’ ability to appeal adverse personnel actions only to disciplinary actions, prohibiting appeals based on compensation decisions. And they reiterated their support for efforts to crack down on union activity in the federal workplace, calling for a ban on official time and repealing

President Biden’s Protecting the Federal Workforce executive order, which repealed a trio of Trump-era executive orders aimed at cracking down on unions, expanding the scope of agency bargaining obligations to include permissive subjects, and rescinding Schedule F, an initiative that would have reclassified tens of thousands of federal workers in “policy-related” positions into a new job category, effectively making them at-will employees. Federal employee unions were quick to denounce the study committee’s fiscal roadmap as a “slap in the face” to the federal workforce.

Source: Government Executive, June 15, 2023

FY 2024 Draft House Spending Bill

The House Appropriations Committee’s Financial Services and General Government Subcommittee on June 22 advanced to the full committee its FY 2024 appropriations bill, which cuts spending on financial agencies and government administration by 58% compared with fiscal 2023 levels. The bill rescinds money authorized by the Inflation Reduction Act to improve Internal Revenue Service staffing and rejects the Biden administration’s request for additional funding to support those investments over the next two years. It also withholds billions in funding for a new FBI headquarters. The legislation was silent on federal employee compensation, effectively endorsing President Joe Biden’s plan to provide federal employees with an average 5.2% pay raise next year, which, if implemented, would mark the largest raise for federal workers since the Carter administration granted feds a 9.1% average pay increase in 1980.

The legislation includes provisions directing federal agencies to roll back their telework policies to pre-pandemic levels within 30 days of the bill’s enactment. The bill includes a policy rider preventing federal funding from going toward abortion services, including via the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHBP) and introduces a new provision that would bar FEHBP from covering gender affirming care, such as surgery, hormone therapy or puberty blockers, for transgender federal workers or their family members. Another provision would bar federal employees and retirees from investing in mutual funds that advance environmental, social or corporate governance principles,

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such as those that are divested from fossil fuel companies, as part of the Thrift Savings Plan’s mutual fund window. The bill also would block funding for the implementation of President Biden’s executive order promoting diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility at federal agencies.

Source: Government Executive, June 22, 2023; NARFE NewsLine, June 27, 2023

Senate FY 2024 Funding Allocations

The Senate Appropriations Committee voted along partisan lines on June 22 on the specific funding levels for each of the 12 appropriations bills Congress must pass annually to keep federal agencies operational. The Fiscal Responsibility Act that President Biden signed into law earlier in June set the top-line funding level for defense at \$886 billion and non-defense discretionary spending at \$704 billion—though pre-agreed-to adjustments will grow the latter number—but lawmakers must still determine how that money will be divided among the 12 bills and for each federal agency. All of the Republicans on the committee voted against the Democratic proposals thus signaling a significant setback for the appropriations process, as 60 votes will be required to advance spending bills and avoid a government shutdown this fall.

Source: Government Executive: June 22, 2023

2024 Defense Authorization Act

The Senate Armed Services Committee on June 23 advanced its draft of the fiscal 2024 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which includes an average 5.2% pay raise for both members of the military and Defense Department civilian workers. This is consistent with the proposal set forth in President Joe Biden’s fiscal 2024 budget request for a 5.2% pay increase for federal workers, the largest since President Jimmy Carter’s 9.1% average pay raise for the federal workforce in 1980. The draft NDAA expands the Defense Department’s direct hire authority for a number of civilian jobs, including

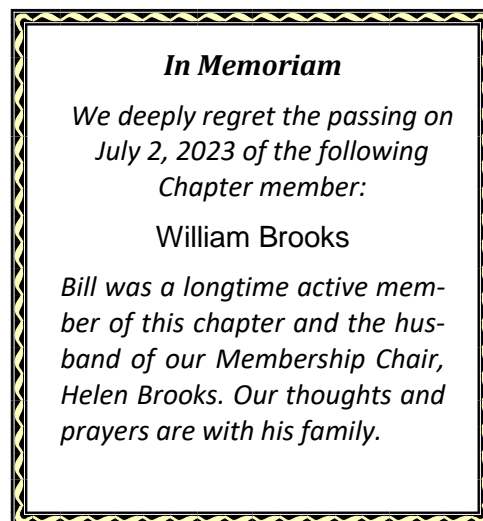
aircraft operations and law enforcement, as well as within the Defense Department inspector general’s office for those workers involved in Ukraine oversight.

Source: Government Executive, June 26, 2023

2024 COLA Watch

After receiving the largest cost of living adjustment (COLA) in 40 years in 2023, the increase for retired government workers is projected to be significantly lower for 2024. The Senior Citizens League, a non-partisan advocacy group, has estimated the 2024 COLA to be 2.7%. The actual COLA for 2024 will be determined based on how much the CPI-W changes in the third quarter of this year compared with last year. The final number will be announced in October and becomes effective on December 1 and will appear in January 2024 annuity payments.

Source: Federal Times, June 14, as reported in the NARFE NewsLine, June 20, 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, giving federal employees planning to retire in the next several years an understanding of what to expect, as well as provide those who are living in retirement a more accurate picture of their benefits.

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.

[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, June 21st

Chapter 356 held its regular monthly meeting, with 11 members and guests present. Guest speakers, Prince William County Inspection Specialists, Dave Hall and Kristian Duff, gave a presentation on building safety and permitting issues.

Mr. Hall advised members considering home remodeling or upgrading to obtain a qualified contractor and develop a plan for implementation, assessing which features require obtaining a permit from the county. He recommended members do their own research on permitting requirements and to not rely solely upon their contractors. As a basic principle, making modifications to existing features normally do not require a permit, but adding something new usually does. Installing or replacing gas appliances always require a permit. Other examples of when a permit is required include: adding more rooms, garages or carports; finishing a basement; installing secondary food preparation, such as a wet bar, second kitchens; sheds greater than 256 square feet in area; any barrier/fence used for pedestrian safety or for a swimming pool; all retaining walls supporting more than three feet of unbalanced fill; retaining wall of any height that supports a surge from a structure above (walls, roads, driveways, sidewalks, etc.); swimming pools or spas impounding more than two feet of water, greater than 150 square feet, and greater than 5,000 gallons; installing a lawn irrigation system; installing a prefabricated fireplace, insert, or wood stove; and installing a new electrical circuit, fixture, or receptacle.

Messrs. Hall and Duff spoke about home safety features and gave examples of how to avoid tripping and fire hazards. They advised to not only replace smoke detector batteries every six months, but also to replace the smoke detectors themselves every ten years. They noted that, although keyed deadbolts provide enhanced security, they also can impede speedy exit from a home should there be a fire and thus they discouraged their use. For more

detailed information, Messrs. Hall and Duff recommended the Prince William County Government website and provided links to help members address their specific issues. (See p. 7 of this newsletter.)

A short business meeting was conducted after the presentation, with officers and committee reports. The Minutes of the May 17 chapter meeting, as reported in the Newsletter, were approved. There was no Treasurer's Report; however, Interim President Brandt reported that the Treasury continued to maintain a robust balance and that the chapter had received \$20 in donations for the Alzheimer's Fund at the previous chapter meeting, which has been donated to the Alzheimer's Association. The current chapter membership stands at 129 and has remained fairly constant this year. Brandt referred members to the Newsletter for information on national legislation. The next regular monthly meeting for Chapter 356 is scheduled for July 19 at the Hibachi Buffet. The July meeting of the Executive Committee, scheduled for July 4, has been cancelled due to the Fourth of July holiday. The next Executive Committee meeting will be held via Zoom at 1:00 on August 1, 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

Guide To Prince William County Government Building Development Websites

- Permits Required/Not Required - <https://www.pwcva.gov/department/building-development-division/do-i-need-permit>
- FAQ's - <https://www.pwcva.gov/department/building-development-division/faqs>
- Solar Panels - <https://www.pwcva.gov/residentialsolar>
- Deck Permit Process Information - <https://www.pwcva.gov/department/building-development-division/residential-deck>
- Retaining Wall Process Information - <https://www.pwcva.gov/department/building-development-division/retaining-wall>
- Fence Process Information - <https://www.pwcva.gov/department/building-development-division/fence>
- Fuel Storage - <https://www.pwcva.gov/department/building-development-division/fuel-storage>
- Lawn Irrigation Systems - <https://www.pwcva.gov/department/building-development-division/lawn-irrigation-system-requirements>
- Residential Charging Stations - <https://www.pwcva.gov/department/building-development-division/residential-EV-charging-stations>
- Pools/Spas/Hot Tubs - <https://www.pwcva.gov/department/building-development-division/residential-pools-spas-hot-tubs>
- Addition or Garage - <https://www.pwcva.gov/department/building-development-division/addition-or-garage>
- Finishing a Residential Basement - <https://www.pwcva.gov/department/building-development-division/basement>
- Residential Buildings, Structures and Additions - <https://www.pwcva.gov/department/building-development-division/residential-buildingaddition>
- New Residential Home - <https://www.pwcva.gov/department/building-development-division/new-home>
- Shed - <https://www.pwcva.gov/department/building-development-division/building-shed>
- Tiny Houses - <https://www.pwcva.gov/bdd/tinyhouses>
- Customer Handouts - <https://www.pwcva.gov/department/building-development-division/>

Alzheimer's Corner
Marilyn Markman, RN

Drug companies are keeping the FDA busy! The newest Alzheimer's drug "Leqembi" - also called Lecanemab - is expected to be approved by the FDA in early July. The article in the Washington Post 6/10/23 states that Leqembi does not just treat symptoms of Alzheimer's (like other therapies do), but also changes the course of the disease. This extends the patient's time in the earlier less severe phase of the illness. It doesn't reverse the damage, but slows the progression of Alzheimer's by 5-6 months.

Each time we see the Alzheimer's numbers we have to read it twice - 6.5 million Americans have Alzheimer's, which is the fifth leading cause of death for people 65 years and older.

Leqembi is designed for those with mild cognitive impairment or early dementia caused by Alzheimer's. It is administered intravenously twice a month - approximate cost \$26,000 a year - another staggering number. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid services said it would cover the cost for those who are willing to take part in data registries designed to track the real-world effects of the treat-

ment. Some do not agree with this stipulation!

As with all drugs, there are side effects and with Leqembi that includes brain swelling and bleeding. Three deaths occurred due to brain hemorrhage, but all 3 patients had a condition called cerebral amyloid angiopathy - a build up of small arteries and capillaries in the brain - difficult to detect by scans.

The drug company Eisai that makes Leqembi estimates the number of people with early Alzheimer's who would be eligible for this drug totals about 100,000 three years after the drugs approval.

Remember the antibody drug Aduhelm? Early approval was given by FDA in 2021, but failed in the market due to contradictory data and sharp coverage curbs imposed by Medicare. Still waiting for approval is the other antibody drug Donanemab.

While we are waiting for the FDA approval, researchers continue to work to find what we all want - a cure. Your continued support through NARFE is helping to achieve this goal.

On another note remember the summer word HYDRATE. Remind everyone - children, adults, seniors and Alzheimer's patients to drink, drink, drink - water or any non alcoholic beverage and stay hydrated!

Chapter 356 Membership Report for June 2023

- 1 reinstated
- 2 dropped for nonrenewal

Chapter 356 membership as of June 30 is 130 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	
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.