

NARFE Chapter 1116 Newsletter

Vienna-Oakton Chapter 1116
1708 Palm Springs Drive
Vienna, VA 22182-2330

OCTOBER 2023

Next Chapter Meeting
Tuesday, October 10, 2023
1:00 PM
Vienna Community Center

Next Board Meeting
Thursday, October 26, 2023
1:00 PM
Vienna Community Center

2023 Board

Chapter Officers

President
Kathy Arpa 703-205-9041
mkarpa@hotmail.com

1st Vice President & Programs
Ralph Dantine 703-938-9757

2nd Vice President &
Membership
Jayne Seidman 703-938-2274

Secretary
Chris Gieseler 703-849-0008

Treasurer
David Graf 703-938-2962

Board Members

Alzheimer's and Photographer
Mark Arpa 703-205-9041

Hostess Jayne Seidman
703-938-2274

National Legislation
Jim Hathaway 703-255-7135

State Legislation
Chris Gieseler 703-849-0008

Newsletter Team
Kathy Arpa, Dave Graf

Public Relations
Pec Chan 703-930-3596

Service Officer
Susan Larson 703-915-2566

Sunshine
Harriet Epstein 703-560-4137

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE – KATHY ARPA

Happy Fall! We were waiting to see what Congress would do over the weekend and it is what most of us expected after living through this ordeal many times during our careers in the Federal Government.

I was looking at our Chapter reports and realized that I have been a member of NARFE for 20 years! Where did that time go??

Mark and I attended the Region X Conference in Frankfort, Kentucky on September 12-14. See report on Page 7.

Susan Larson and Chris Gieseler are serving on the Nominating Committee this year. See their report on Page 4. The election of officers will be at our November 14th Chapter Meeting. If you are interested in an office or serving on a committee, please let Susan or Chris know your interests.

Kathy

TREASURER'S REPORT – DAVE GRAF

Since the September Newsletter, we received \$59.88 for membership dues collected by NARFE's National Headquarters for August. Also, \$10.00 was received for Chapter Dues from one of our Lifetime members. There have not been any expenses.

The 50/50 drawing for Alzheimer's Research raised \$59.00 at the September 19th Membership meeting. The donations were sent to the VFN Coordinator for the Alzheimer's Research Fund. The total contribution this year is \$278.50.

If you would like to help find a cure for Alzheimer's, you can send a donation by mail to: Treasurer, NARFE Chapter 1116, 1708 Palm Springs Drive, Vienna, VA 22182-2330. Please make checks payable to **NARFE Alzheimer's Research Fund** and include **Chapter 1116** on the memo line.

COMING UP

October 10 – Chapter Meeting – 1 PM – Michele Nesbitt-Johnson, MSA, Blue Cross Blue Shield Sr. Account Consultant, FEHBP Account Management

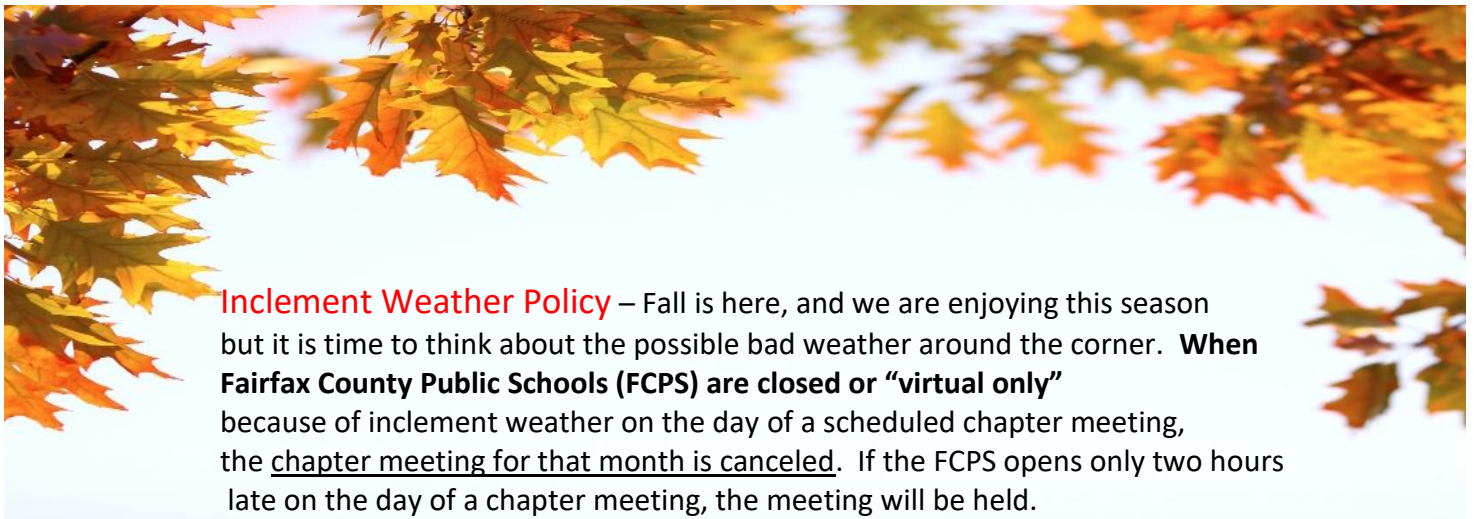
October 17-18 – VFN Board Meeting – Homewood Suites, Fredericksburg, VA

October 27 – NOVA Caucus Meeting – 11:30 AM - American Legion Post 177, 3939 Oak St., Fairfax, VA. Everyone is invited. RSVP to Kathy by October 23.

November 14 – Chapter Meeting – 1 PM – Dr. Kelsey Trinkka will speak on hearing loss and solutions. We will also have the Election of Officers for 2024.

November 18 - Congressman Gerry Connolly's Annual Health Fair will be held in the Fairfax County Government Center. 10 AM to 1 PM.

December 12 – 11:30 AM - Annual Holiday Party. Location TBD & Installation of 2024 Officers.



Be Prepared for Flu Season

The Fairfax County Health Department is encouraging everyone six months and older to prepare for flu season by getting a flu vaccine. A yearly flu vaccine is the most important step in protecting yourself and your loved ones against flu viruses. Everyone six months and older should get a vaccine every season, with rare exceptions. Vaccination is especially important for people who are at higher risk of serious flu complications — such as people 65 years and older, young children, and people with certain health conditions.



MEMBERSHIP REPORT – JAYNE SEIDMAN

As of October 1, 2023, the membership for Chapter 1116 was as follows: Total Current Chapter members – 169, Total National Members in Chapter Area - 138, Grand Total = 307. Lifetime members 20. Virginia Totals: Chapter members - 4,401, National Members - 6,090 = 10,491 NARFE Members in the Virginia Federation (VFN) with 31 chapters.

Just a reminder that you can receive \$10 for each new member recruited during the period September 1 – December 31, 2023. Please include your membership number, which is on the mailing label on your NARFE Magazine, on the application, which can be found in your October NARFE magazine after page 56. You can also give a “gift membership” to a friend, neighbor or family member who will be retiring this year.

SERVICE OFFICER REPORT – SUSAN LARSON

FEHBP & FEDVIP Open Season – The annual period during which eligible federal employees, retirees and survivors can make changes to their health benefits coverage for the following year takes place from November 13 through December 11, 2023. It is important to consider cost comparison when choosing FEHB and FEDVIP plans. No action is required unless you want to make a change.

While the average premium increase for 2024 is 5.8% overall, the federal government’s share will increase by an average of 5.0%, and the enrollee share will increase by an average of 7.7%. Annual average premium increases for previous years were 7.2% in 2023, 2.4% in 2022, 3.6% in 2021, 4.0% in 2020, 1.3% in 2019, 4.0% in 2018, 4.4% in 2017 and 6.4% in 2016.

The Postal Service Health Benefits (PSHB) Program will be a new, separate program within FEHB that will insure eligible Postal Service employees, Postal Service annuitants, and their eligible family members, starting on January 1, 2025. The PSHB Program coverage will replace FEHB Program coverage for these groups. Postal Service employees, annuitants, and eligible family members continue to participate in the FEHB Program through December 31, 2024.

There is an article about open season on pages 36-40 of the October NARFE magazine. Plan to look for more information in the November and December issues. For more details on coverage options, visit www.narfe.org/open-season. You can also get information about the Blue Cross/Blue Shield plans at our Chapter Meeting on October 10th or visit Congressman Gerry Connolly's Annual Health Fair on November 18th at the Fairfax County Government Center.

DOD Civilian Retiree Cards No Longer Valid -- Please note, as of August 31st, Department of Defense (DoD) Civilian Retiree Identification (ID) cards are invalid. Instead, to access welfare and recreation activities at DoD installations, DoD retirees will need to enroll their REAL ID-compliant driver’s license for future use at an installation’s Visitor Control Center. Retirees will need to bring their Standard Form 50 with them to enroll. Access to the installation remains at the discretion of installation commanders. For more information, please go to: <https://www.dcpas.osd.mil/policy/retirement/retirementidcard>

Beacon 50+ Expo -- The Beacon Newspaper 50+ Expo, in conjunction with the Fairfax County Department of Family Services for Older Adults, takes place Sunday, October 15, 2023, from 12:00 – 4:00 p.m. It will be on the upper level of the Springfield Town Center. Health screenings, flu shots, and vaccines, along with an array of information on local resources will be available.



REPORT ON SEPTEMBER CHAPTER MEETING – CHRIS GIESELER

The Chapter was pleased to host the first 2023 Election Forum for the candidates for the Town Council of Vienna and the Mayor (who is running unopposed) at the Chapter's September 19, 2023 Membership meeting. President Kathy Arpa called the meeting to order at 1:01 pm in the Auditorium of the Vienna Community Center. The guests at the meeting included Linda Colbert, the Mayor of the Town of Vienna, and six of the current candidates for Vienna Town Council. Also attending was Brian Trompeter, a Staff Writer for the "Gazette Leader" local Newspaper. Kathy invited the mayor to lead the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance. Following the Pledge, the Mayor gave a few remarks, then Kathy explained the ground rules that would govern the Candidates Forum portion of the meeting. The candidates were given five minutes each to make their case. A question-and-answer period followed. At the conclusion of the Q&A, the meeting paused for a break that the candidates were invited to attend. (See detailed report on the Forum in the Gazette Newspaper, www.gazetteleader.com dated September 28, 2023). After the break, the business portion of the meeting was gavelled in by Kathy. Reports were given and announcements were made. More detailed and updated reports and announcements are presented elsewhere in this Newsletter. The 50/50 drawings and door prizes occurred, after which the meeting was adjourned at 3:07 pm.



Some of the candidates running in the November 7 election for Vienna Town Council with the Mayor (from left) Roy Baldwin, Jessica Ramakin, Howard Springsteen, Mayor Linda Colbert, Ray Brill, Jr., Charles Anderson, and Sandra Allen at the September 19th Candidate Forum at the Vienna Community Center hosted by our Chapter.

(Photo by Mark Arpa)

NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT – SUSAN LARSON AND CHRIS GIESELER

The Nominating Committee, consisting of Susan Larson and Chris Gieseler, is pleased to announce the following candidates for the Chapter's Officer positions for 2024:

President	Kathy Arpa
1 st Vice-President	Ralph Dantine
2 nd Vice-President	Jayne Seidman
Secretary	Nancy Burke Sanow
Treasurer	David Graf

The election of officers will be at the November 14th Chapter Meeting. Nominations from the floor will be accepted.

SUNSHINE REPORT – HARRIET EPSTEIN

Irene Coyne is recuperating at home after her stay at a rehab facility recovering from a fall in August. If you know of someone who needs a little sunshine, please call me on 703-560-4137.

LEGISLATION REPORTS

National Legislation – Jim Hathaway

FY2024 Federal Budget. The U.S. was barreling toward what would have been one of the largest government shutdowns in history -- until a stopgap 45-day funding bill was hastily passed by Congress and signed by President Joe Biden on Saturday night, September 30, shortly before the deadline.

Had lawmakers failed to reach an agreement, 3.5 million federal workers and active-duty military would have been expected to go without a paycheck, millions of women and children would have lost nutrition assistance, national parks would have closed and more. The stop-gap legislation extended current spending levels and lasts through November 17, 2023. It affords more time for the House's Republican majority and the Senate's Democratic majority to work out longer-term bills.

Before the August recess, the Senate passed its version of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), voting 86 to 11 in favor of the bill. The legislation authorizes a 5.2 percent pay increase for military service members and Department of Defense civilian workers. This further increases the likelihood of a 5.2 percent pay increase for the federal workforce. The House is expected to take up its version of the NDAA this month, after which the two chambers will work towards a compromise. In prior years, Congress routinely passed the NDAA every year.

“Schedule F”. A Trump administration executive order known as “Schedule F” created a broad exception to the system of rules ensuring civil servants are hired and fired based on merit, not political affiliation and loyalty, or lack thereof. The order, revoked in January 2021, sought to move tens of thousands of career federal employees in policy-making positions to a new job classification outside the merit system, removing standard employment protections.

On September 15, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) issued a proposed rule designed to reinforce the merit-based, nonpartisan Civil Service. The rule, “Upholding Civil Service Protections and Merit System Principles”, would allow Federal employees to keep their existing job protections and clarify that these protections cannot be taken away unless the employee gives up these rights voluntarily.

Before Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) passed away on September 28, 2023, she submitted legislation that would block the return of the merit system breaking Schedule F. It would “add a procedural roadblock in the way of any future administration looking to undermine merit-based protections via a return of Schedule F, or other similar efforts”.

Social Security COLA next year. Thanks in large part to the Federal Reserve’s continued interest rate hikes, inflation has cooled. That means next year’s COLA will be much lower than the 8.7% increase beneficiaries received in 2023. The latest 2024 COLA prediction of 3.2% from The Senior Citizens League, released September 13, is above the 20-year average of 2.6%. That would increase the average SSA monthly benefit by \$58, making the typical recipient’s check \$1,885.

The final COLA is expected to be announced by the Social Security Administration at 8:30 a.m. ET on October 12, when the Bureau of Labor Statistics releases inflation numbers for the third quarter. Social Security beneficiaries start receiving their COLA increase at the beginning of the year, and usually get paid on the third day of each month. That means beneficiaries will see their first payment that includes the 2024 COLA increase on January 3, 2024.

Virginia State Legislation – Chris Gieseler

Early Voting. Early voting is underway in Virginia; please refer to the website www.FairfaxCounty.gov/Elections for more details on times and locations for voting. Besides the Mayor and Town Council of the Town of Vienna, all seats in the Virginia General Assembly will be voted on. Many Fairfax County offices such as the Chairman and Board of Supervisors and School Board are also on the ballot. A comprehensive listing of every office and local issue has been prepared by the League of Women Voters. (It is available at all the local Fairfax County libraries.) Early voting ends on Saturday, November 4th. Election Day is Tuesday, November 7, 2023.

Sales Tax Holiday. A state sales-tax holiday **in Virginia will occur October 20-22, 2023**, because of the budget amendments act that was enacted in September 2023. In 2024, the state sales tax holiday will occur on August 2-4, 2024. The following types of items, subject to various dollar limits, will be exempt from state sales tax (including local sales taxes) during the holiday period.

- Hurricane Preparedness items (e.g., batteries and portable generators) (cost limits vary depending on item).
- School supplies, clothing, and footwear (\$20 limit per item). Computers, sports equipment, protective equipment, and clothing accessories (such as cosmetics and watches) are **not** exempt; and
- Energy Star and WaterSense items and appliances (e.g., air conditioners, toilets) (Cost limit \$2,500).

Refer to the Virginia Department of Taxation’s website www.tax.virginia.gov/virginia-sales-tax-holiday for more-detailed lists of eligible items and applicable cost limitations. The website also links to a document, the “Guidelines for Combined Sales Tax Holiday,” which explains some other details about the tax exemption, including how store discounts and buy-one-get-one sales offers could affect the calculation of the sales tax exemption.

One-Time Income Tax Rebates. **In general**, Virginia taxpayers who have already filed their state income tax returns for 2022 or will do so by November 1, 2023, will get a one-time tax rebate of the state income taxes they paid for 2022 (i.e., their tax liability for that year). The rebates are limited to a maximum of \$200 for single-filers and \$400 for joint filers. For taxpayers who filed their returns before July 1, 2023, the rebate is to be issued on or before November 30, 2023. The law is silent on when the taxpayers who filed on or after July 1, 2023, should expect their rebate. The budget amendments act established the rebate discussed here.

REPORT ON REGION X CONFERENCE – KATHY ARPA

The Region X Conference was held in Frankfort, Kentucky on September 12-14, 2023. Robert Allen, (pictured here) our Region X Vice President, presided over the Conference. There were 47 attendees from the five federations in Region X. We had a full agenda with guest speakers on zoom from NARFE Headquarters, including Bill Shackelford, NARFE National President, Johann DeCastro, Chief of Staff, Nora MacDonald, Director of Member Engagement, John Hatton, NARFE Staff Vice President, Policy and Programs and Jenn Rafael, NARFE Director of Communications and Marketing. Donna Shackelford, Region X Alzheimer's Coordinator, also gave a zoom presentation. We had updates on advocacy, membership, and communications. Other speakers included representatives from Blue Cross and Blue Shield, and Aetna. There was also a presentation about scams affecting seniors.



Federation presidents or their representative shared news of activities in their states.



Frances Boatman gave an excellent presentation and introduced the members from the Virginia Federation who were present.

Left to right – Mike Thurber, Frances Boatman (VFN President), Doris McAdams, (VFN Public Relations Chair), Ora McCoy, Kathy Arpa, (VFN Newsletter Editor), and Mark Arpa at the Region X Conference in Frankfort, KY.

We had an opportunity to see some of the sights of Frankfort, which is the capital of Kentucky, including a working clock made of flowers.



On the last day of the Conference, I presented Robert Allen with a card signed by all of the attendees congratulating him on his 50th wedding anniversary, which was the next day! He was quite surprised.

The next NARFE Region X Conference is scheduled for 2025 in Tennessee, maybe Pigeon Forge!! The next NARFE FEDCON will be in St. Louis, Missouri in August 2024.