



NARFE Chapter 1116 Newsletter

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

DECEMBER 2023

Next Chapter Meeting
Tuesday, December 12, 2023
11:30 AM
Pan Am Family Restaurant

Next Board Meeting
Thursday, January 25, 2024
1:00 PM
Vienna Community Center

2023 Board **Chapter Officers**

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

1st Vice President & Programs
Ralph Dantinne 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

My calendar says it is December. Where did the year go? While you are busy with the hustle and bustle with friends, family, and your community celebrating the big holidays of **Hannukah** (Dec. 7th – 15th), **Christmas** (Dec. 25th), and **Kwanzaa** (Dec. 26-Jan. 1st), don't forget to make plans to attend our Chapter Holiday Party on December 12. (See details on page 2.)

At our November Chapter Meeting we heard from Dr. Kelsey Trinkka, an audiologist, who provided a PowerPoint presentation with vital information about the importance of hearing aids. There was much audience participation. We had visitors from two local chapters: Chapter 7 (Arlington) and Chapter 737 (Fairfax) as well as visitors from a local church.

2023 was a busy year for our Chapter with a variety of topics/events and speakers. We had a program on "How to use Uber"; Maddy White from Congressman Connolly's office; Linda Colbert, the Mayor of Vienna; Peggy James, Director of the Vienna Business Association; an ice cream social; a picnic at Jayne's home; a Town of Vienna candidate forum; a representative from Blue Cross/Blue Shield; and Dr. Kelsey Trinkka. If you have suggestions for programs in 2024, please contact our Program Chair Ralph Dantinne.

Kathy

Inclement Weather Policy –. When Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) are closed or "virtual only" because of inclement weather on the day of a scheduled chapter meeting, the chapter meeting for that month is canceled. If the FCPS opens only two hours late on the day of a chapter meeting, the meeting will be held.

COMING UP

December 11 – FEHB Open Season ends at midnight

December 12 – 11:30 AM - Annual Holiday Party at Pan Am Family Restaurant & Installation of 2024 Officers

December 21 – First Day of Winter

January 9, 2024 – 1 PM – VCC – Guest speaker, Mark Arpa, Alzheimer’s Chair

February 13, 2024 -- 1 PM – VCC – Guest speaker, Lawrence MacDonald, author of “Am I Too Old to Save The Planet? A Boomer’s Guide to Climate Action”

April 7 – 10, 2024 -- 2024 Annual VFN Conference will be held at the Hotel Madison in Harrisonburg, Virginia. Watch future newsletters for more details.

CHAPTER HOLIDAY PARTY -- DECEMBER 12 – 11:30 AM

The annual Holiday Party will be held on Tuesday, December 12th beginning at 11:30 am at the Pan Am Family Restaurant (same location as last year). The address is 3051 Nutley St. Fairfax, VA 22031 (in the Pan Am Shopping Center between the Safeway and CVS stores).



We have reserved the semi-private party room. In consultation with the owner, a special menu is planned, including a vegan and salad options. The full menu will also be available. Each attendee will pay for their meal. The Chapter will provide a cake. Attendees may also bring their favorite dessert(s) to share.

If you didn’t sign up at the November Meeting, you can sign up for the Party by calling Dave Graf at 703-938-2962 or Jayne Seidman at 703-938-2274 no later than Sunday, **December 10th**. All NARFE members and guests are welcome. Officers for 2024 will be installed.

We will collect donations of cash or checks for the Toys for Tots Foundation, and we will have the popular 50/50 drawing for NARFE’s Alzheimer’s Research Fund. If you would like to participate in a voluntary gift exchange, please bring a wrapped gift with a value of \$20 or more.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT – JAYNE SEIDMAN

As of December 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. We welcome new members: Kate Stoney, Nancy DeVera and Eugenia Bodnar. We mourn the passing of Robert Stankey.

Membership in NARFE is a wonderful holiday present for friends and family. During NARFE’s 2023 Fall Membership Drive, which runs until December 31, 2023, current members can earn \$10 for each new member they recruit. In addition, the Virginia Federation will match the \$10 for each member recruited, for a total of \$20 for each new member you recruit! The deadline is fast approaching. A Membership form is in each issue of the NARFE magazine or can be downloaded from the narfe.org website. Be sure to fill in the form with “**Chapter # 1116**” and **your name and membership id #** (found on your magazine label) to ensure that you get credit for your recruiting efforts.

TREASURER'S REPORT – DAVE GRAF

Since the November Newsletter, we received \$114.26 for membership dues collected by NARFE's National Headquarters for October. The only expense was \$38.63 for two Chapter ID badges for our newly elected Secretary and our National Legislation Chair. I will make a \$200.00 donation (as authorized in the approved Chapter budget) to the Town of Vienna, Parks and Recreation for use of the Community Center meeting rooms this year.

The 50/50 drawing for Alzheimer's Research raised \$75.00 at the November 14th Chapter meeting. If you would like to help find a cure for Alzheimer's, you can mail a tax-deductible donation before the end of the year 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. OR, bring your cash or checks to our December 12th Holiday Party.

SERVICE OFFICER REPORT – SUSAN LARSON

NARFE provides expert guidance in Webinars on federal benefit issues directly affecting current and former federal employees, as well as tips and tools to help ensure a safe and secure retirement for the federal community. Webinars are free to NARFE members; you must log in to get member pricing. If you need assistance logging in, please email loginhelp@narfe.org for help. Members have unlimited access to archived webinars.

As you spend time with your family over the holidays, it is a good time to update your contact information, phone numbers, addresses, etc., in your "Be Prepared for Life's Events" Booklet. The purpose of this guide is to help you organize your personal and financial information in one location so your survivors will have the information they will need to handle your affairs upon your death. While one's death is a difficult topic to discuss, reviewing this information with your family will help them understand the steps they will need to take. Any questions that come up can also be addressed ahead of time. You should ensure that your family members review this guide with you and know where it is located. You can find a copy of the booklet on the website www.narfe.org. Log in and look under (Federation and Chapter) Forms (F-100). You can fill out the form online.



REPORT ON NOVEMBER 14TH CHAPTER MEETING – CHRIS GIESELER



Chapter President Kathy Arpa called the Chapter meeting to order at 1:06 pm at the Vienna Community Center (VCC). The Pledge of Allegiance was led by our Veterans: (left to right) – Ted Pasek, Area X Vice President, and Chapter Members Ralph Dantinne, Jim Brooker and Dave Graf.

Kathy introduced two new Chapter members: Eugenia Bodnar and Nancy DeVera.

Treasurer Dave Graf introduced our guest speaker, Dr. Kelsey Trinka (pictured here). She is a licensed and certified audiologist and since 2018 has worked at Hearing Associates of Northern Virginia, located in McLean. Dr. Trinka explained that she believes in providing personalized care to find solutions regarding a patients' hearing loss. She also does work with cochlear implants. Her advice: **be your own advocate when you are not hearing well!**

Dr. Trinka discussed the prevalence and causes of hearing loss, emphasizing its impact on individuals' daily lives and its impact on communication. Additionally, she provided valuable insights into the multi-faceted aspects of hearing loss, the solutions available through hearing aids and cochlear implants and the essential role of early intervention.



At the conclusion of Dr. Trinka's presentation, Kathy presented her with a NARFE coffee cup as a token of the Chapter's appreciation. Dr. Trinka's office phone is (703) 748-3300. **[For the full report of her presentation, please read the separate document that was emailed with this newsletter.]**

Election of Officers:

Nominating Committee member Chris Gieseler conducted the election of the five Chapter officers for 2024. The Nominating Committee (Susan Larson and Chris) had presented a slate of nominees at the October Membership meeting for each of the positions. There were no nominations from the floor. A motion was made and seconded to elect the slate of officers by acclamation. The motion passed unanimously. The following members were elected for the Chapter's Officer positions for 2024:

President
1st Vice-President
2nd Vice-President
Secretary
Treasurer

Kathy Arpa
Ralph Dantinne
Jayne Seidman
Nancy Burke Sanow
David Graf

The newly elected officers will be installed at the Holiday Party on December 12 and will take office on January 1, 2024.

Area X Vice-President Ted Pasek congratulated the newly elected officers. He reminded everyone that members can earn \$10 from NARFE and \$10 from the Virginia Federation of NARFE (VFN) for each new member they recruit before January 1st. He also reminded the attendees that the VFN annual convention will be in Harrisonburg, VA, starting on April 7, 2024.

The meeting recessed for a break. Following the break, Kathy called the meeting back to order. She thanked Hostess Jayne Seidman and those who had brought goodies for the break. Kathy then asked for Officer and Committee reports. Updated versions of those reports, information about upcoming programs and the Chapter's Annual Holiday Party, and other announcements can be found elsewhere in this Newsletter.

After the drawings for the 50/50 cash raffle and door prizes were conducted by Margaret Murphy, Kathy made several closing announcements. A motion was made and seconded, and the meeting adjourned at 3:12 pm.



SUNSHINE REPORT – HARRIET EPSTEIN

It was good to see Mary Margaret McGowan who moved to Sterling a few months ago and also Anne Shea at our November meeting. On November 19th, some family and friends kicked off Thanksgiving week by joining Shirley Martin at the Vienna American Legion Post 180 monthly breakfast. Sympathy to the family of Robert Stankey. If you know of someone who needs a little sunshine, please call me on 703-560-4137.

LEGISLATION REPORTS

National Legislation – Jim Hathaway

2024 Employee Pay Raise. The temporary budget extension carrying funding for federal agencies—some to January 19 and others to February 2—virtually guarantees that federal employees will receive an average 5.2 percent raise in January (0.5% to be designated for locality pay).

That would be the largest since an increase of 9.1 percent in 1980 and would be 0.6 percentage points above the average 4.6 percent raise paid in January of this year, which had been the largest since an average increase of 4.6 in 2002.

The 5.2 percent average figure has been the most likely for 2024 through the course of the year, after President Biden proposed it in his budget submission and Congress started writing spending bills with no mention of a raise. Under the pay law, if Congress does not enact a figure by the end of the calendar year, the President can set the recommended figure by default.

The locality adjustment is based on findings of pay gaps in more than four dozen areas with their own rates, as reported by the Federal Salary Council. Also, effective in 2024 four new localities (Fresno, Calif.; Reno, Nev.; Rochester, N.Y.; and Spokane, Wash.) will be created and the boundaries of most current localities will be expanded. These actions will provide an additional pay boost to about 16,200 employees in the new localities and about 17,100 employees in areas to be added to existing localities.

Effort to Repeal WEP and GPO. The House Ways and Means Committee held its first hearing in years on the two provisions, dubbed the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO). Backers are hopeful the panel will take up bills to get rid of the laws as a next step in 2024. To force a vote on the House floor, a bill must be placed on the “consensus calendar,” a step that so far has not been taken.

Lawmakers enacted the WEP and GPO provisions in the late 1970s and early 1980s to make sure that public employees like state government workers, firefighters, police and teachers do not get unfairly high Social Security payouts.

The intent was to prevent these public sector employees from “double dipping” — receiving both their own government pensions as well as full Social Security benefits, even though they didn’t fully pay into the Social Security system via payroll taxes during their careers.

A majority of lawmakers are on board with overturning the laws, which they say dock benefits too severely, make it harder for public workers to retire comfortably and create a disincentive to enter public service.

Those arguing against repealing WEP and GPO say it would be costly and possibly grant unfairly high benefits to some retirees. They contend that a new formula is needed to avoid draining Social Security’s retiree trust fund even sooner as it faces insolvency in the coming decade. The Congressional Budget Office estimated last year that removing WEP and GPO would cost \$183 billion over a decade and make Social Security unable to fully fund benefits about six months sooner.

One bill to overhaul the WEP and GPO would replace it with a new formula based on how much of a career the beneficiary spent working in Social Security-covered jobs. Even with the House Ways and Means Committee taking up the issue and a speaker, who’s been an ally in the past, the panel’s top Democrat said the cost remains a critical hangup.

State Legislation – Chris Gieseler

The VFN 2024 State Legislative Plan. The Virginia Federation of NARFE (VFN) has released its Virginia 2024 State Legislative Plan for distribution to VFN chapters. The Plan sets forth the VFN’s Legislative priorities for the upcoming Regular Session of the Virginia General Assembly. The four priorities are:

- Exempt a segment of Civil Service Retirement System pensions equivalent to Social Security Retirement benefits;
- Extend the Virginia age deduction by eliminating the current income-level requirement;
- Enact a Family Caregiver Tax Credit;
- Address certain nursing-home priorities.

The plan was developed by the VFN State Legislation Team for submission to, and approval by, the VFN Board of Directors. The plan will be shared with members of the Virginia General Assembly, which meets January 10, 2024.

The 2024 General Assembly. This is an update from retiring VFN State Legislation Chair Debbie Fisk:

Almost half of the newly elected Virginia Senate arrived in Fairfax County on November 15, 2023, for a “first day of school” on the state budget, as 17 newly elected senators prepare to take office in January and replace veteran leadership transformed by retirement and political defeat. Nowhere is the generational change of leadership more apparent than on the Senate Finance & Appropriations Committee, which is losing nine of its 15 members, including its co-chairs. The three-day retreat began with what retiring Senator Tommy Norment (R-James City) described as an “extraordinary” tutorial on the state budget by April Kees, the committee’s staff director.

One of Kees’ first lessons for new senators was the separation of powers between the governor and legislature, especially in adopting a two-year budget in even-numbered years and revising it in odd-numbered years. Governor Youngkin will propose a new two-year budget on Dec. 20 for the newly elected General Assembly to revise and adopt in a 60-day session that will begin January 10. The budget that the new legislature adopts will be in place from July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2026.

The senators got a full overview of projected revenues and costs in a presentation by Kees on November 16. The House Appropriations Committee already has sounded an alarm about the state’s overreliance on multibillion-dollar year-end surpluses in the last three fiscal years, as emergency federal aid during the COVID-19 public health emergency disappears.

In the House committee’s budget retreat held on November 14, 2023 in Richmond, Staff Director Anne Oman said projected revenues barely exceed the base operating budget of state government in the general fund, which relies on income, sales and other state taxes. Youngkin and the General Assembly will have some money to spend because of continued revenue and money carried forward from the current fiscal year, but they also face more than \$2 billion in mandatory spending obligations, primarily for K-12 public education and the state’s Medicaid program of health care for more than 2 million elderly, disabled and low-income Virginians.

This all seems like an overwhelming amount of information to absorb, even for the 11 newly elected senators who previously have served in the House or Senate. Retiring Senator Dick Saslaw (D-Fairfax) commented that “for a lot of these new people, this seems like drinking from a fire hose, it’s a learning process”.

