

NARFE Chapter 1116 Newsletter

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

JANUARY 2024

Next Chapter Meeting
Tuesday, January 9, 2024
1:00 PM
Vienna Community Center

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

2024 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
Nancy Burke-Sanow
703-869-4799

Treasurer
David Graf 703-938-2962

Members
Alzheimer's & 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

Yes, it is 2024! I hope everyone had a pleasant, joyful holiday season and enjoyed the mild weather. It would have been nice to have a white Christmas. We had a delightful Holiday Party in December and installed our new officers. See report on page 3.

Our next Chapter Meeting will be on Tuesday, January 9, 2024 at 1 PM. We welcome Nancy Burke-Sanow as our new secretary and thank Chris Gieseler for his service as secretary from 2022 to 2023.

Chapters are getting back in the swing of NARFE activities. Many members are involved in planning our 2024 Virginia Federation of NARFE (VFN) Conference. It will be held on April 7-10 in Harrisonburg, VA. I will be bringing registration forms and supporter forms to the chapter meeting on January 9th. All chapter members and guests are encouraged to attend all, or part, of the conference.

Kathy

MEMBERSHIP REPORT – JAYNE SEIDMAN

As of January 1, 2024, the membership for Chapter 1116 was as follows: Total Current Chapter members - 167, Total National Members in Chapter Area – 142, Grand Total = 309. We are not aware of any new members in December.

COMING UP

January 9, 2024 – 1 PM – VCC – Chapter Meeting - Speaker, Mark Arpa, Alzheimer’s Chair

**February 2 – 11:30 AM - NOVA Caucus Meeting - American Legion Post 177, 3939 Oak St., Fairfax, VA.
Everyone is invited**

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

March 12 – 1 PM – VCC – Chapter Meeting – Speaker TBD

April 7 – 10 -- 2024 Annual VFN Conference will be held at the Hotel Madison in Harrisonburg, Virginia.

April 16 - 1 PM – VCC – Chapter Meeting – Speaker TBD [NOTE: this is the 3rd Tuesday]

TREASURER’S REPORT – DAVE GRAF

Since the December Newsletter, the chapter received \$215.64 for membership dues collected by NARFE’s National Headquarters for November. The first expense was \$28.27 to reimburse Dave Graf for purchasing the cake that the chapter provided at the December 12th Holiday Party. The second expense was \$200.00 for our annual 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 \$56.50 at the Holiday Party. Checks and cash totaling \$60.00 was also contributed to the Alzheimer’s Research Fund. These donations were sent to the VFN Coordinator for the NARFE Alzheimer’s Research Fund. The total contribution for 2023 was \$604.00. On December 30th, I received an IRA Distribution check from a member for \$500.00 for the Alzheimer’s Research Fund. Since it was received too late to credit to calendar year 2023, it will be sent to the VFN Coordinator for the Fund with contributions received at our January Chapter Meeting.

Also at the Holiday Party, checks and cash totaling \$60.00 was received for the Marine Toys for Tots Foundation. This donation has been sent to the Marine Toys for Tots Foundation.

SERVICE OFFICER REPORT – SUSAN LARSON

As the holiday season winds down, the looming arrival of **tax season** takes center stage, prompting questions about deadlines, income tax brackets, and contribution limits. To help you prepare, here are answers to common questions and important changes for the upcoming tax season.

Mark your calendars for **Tax Day 2024 - April 15**, falling on a Monday. The IRS estimates the start date for filing 2023 taxes to be **January 18, 2024**, providing an opportunity for taxpayers to submit returns earlier than in previous years. Filing electronically with direct deposit ensures a faster refund, with the potential for receipt within 21 days.

Income tax brackets saw a 7% increase for 2023, with further rises expected in 2024. For instance, individual filers will face a 37% tax rate for incomes exceeding \$578,125. The standard deduction also increased by 7% for 2023, \$13,850 for individuals and \$27,700 for married couples filing jointly. Additional standard deductions apply to those over 65.

Itemized deductions remain mostly unchanged, with a \$10,000 cap on state and local tax deductions. Retirement plan contribution limits rose to \$22,500 in 2023 for employees in company retirement plans.

In 2023, health savings account (HSA) contribution limits were \$3,850 for individual coverage and \$7,750 for family coverage. For 2024, these limits increase to \$4,150 and \$8,300, respectively. Child tax credits in 2023 were up to \$2,000 per qualifying dependent under 17, with reductions for higher incomes.

Filing early can lead to a quicker refund, and various platforms like TurboTax, H&R Block, NerdWallet, and AARP, offer tax refund estimators for planning. However, it's crucial to note that filing early doesn't necessarily mean taxes must be paid early. Taxes for 2023 are due by April 15, 2024.

REPORT OF CHAPTER HOLIDAY PARTY – CHRIS GIESELER

The December 12, 2023 Holiday Party/Chapter Meeting (the party) was held at the Pan Am Restaurant, Fairfax, VA (the same location as the last two years). The scheduled starting time for the meeting was 11:30 am, but members and guests were arriving before and after that time and were engaged in socializing and chitchat and enjoying goodies donated by Hostess Jayne Seidman and other chapter members.



After lunch orders were taken, Chapter President Kathy Arpa began the business portion of the meeting around 12:15 pm. The focus was the installation of the Chapter's Officers for 2024. Kathy introduced Ted Pasek, Area X Vice President, Virginia Federation of NARFE (VFN), who administered the oath of office to the recently elected Chapter Officers. Pictured left to right - Kathy Arpa, President; Ralph Dantine, 1st Vice President; Jayne Seidman, 2nd Vice President; Nancy Burke-Sanow, Secretary; and David Graf, Treasurer. Ted then offered his congratulations to the newly installed officers, and a round of applause followed.

from NARFE and \$10 from VFN for bringing in new members to NARFE no later than December 31st.

Kathy then presented Nancy Senow and Jim Hathaway with their respective ID badges of office and presented Chris Gieseler, retiring Secretary, with a Citation for Distinguished Service as the Chapter's Secretary (2022 and 2023). Photo of the certificate presentation is at the right.

With the business portion of the meeting completed, each attendee's lunch was served. Members were free to enjoy the cake that the chapter had purchased as dessert and the other goodies at the party.



Margaret Murphy conducted drawings for: the 50/50 for Alzheimer's Research (there were two winners: Jim Hathaway and Kathy Arpa, who each won \$18.50); and door prizes (poinsettias and Christmas cacti) donated by Ralph Dantine. The Chapter took up collections for two deserving groups: Alzheimer's Research and Toys for Tots. Many attendees then participated in a Secret Santa gift exchange.

After concluding remarks by Kathy, the party ended at 1:40 pm. There were 22 Chapter members and guests in attendance at the party.



Many of the Members and Guests,
dressed in holiday apparel (all photos
by Mark Arpa)

SUNSHINE REPORT – HARRIET EPSTEIN

Shirley Martin had a surprise visitor when she was having breakfast at American Legion Post 180 in Vienna on December 17. Pictured here with Shirley is Faye Morison's daughter, Marjorie. Faye was a member of our chapter for many, many years before she moved to North Carolina and passed away.



We are sending sympathy to the families of Kathy Arpa and Dolores Inch, whose brother James Rouse passed away on December 29, 2023, in Pennsylvania. James was a U.S. Air Force Veteran and lived in Dushore, Pennsylvania. Cards may be sent to: The Rouse Family, 2717 Bowling Green Drive, Vienna, VA 22180.

If you know of someone who needs a little sunshine, please call me on 703-560-4137.

MEET OUR NEW CHAPTER SECRETARY



Nancy Burke-Sanow (aka Nancy Sanow) spent her early years in Scranton, PA. She attended a small Catholic school, where she was fascinated by the nun's flowing habits and stiff and austere head gear. She spent her very early years living in the same neighborhood in Scranton as President Biden. She is familiar with the sandwich shop where he stops for a hoagie (and the Secret Service first checks out the place for any issues). Nancy was thrilled when her parents relayed that the family would be moving to a suburb outside Harrisburg, PA - the state capital. Nancy attended a brand new Catholic high school. When it came time to apply to colleges, she decided that she wanted to attend college in Washington, DC. She attended the School of International Service at American University and graduated with a degree in International Studies.

After college graduation, Nancy worked as a legislative assistant to a Congressman from Pennsylvania. Her immediate supervisor encouraged Nancy to attend law school. Nancy took the LSAT (the law school admissions exam) and was accepted at Georgetown University's Law School. She attended classes in the evening so that she could continue her day job to pay her expenses. She was accepted as a member of Georgetown's international law journal. Nancy applied to work at the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and was offered a position in the Division of Trading and Markets. Nancy ultimately became an Assistant Director and she worked with various attorneys reviewing submissions by national securities exchanges, among other tasks.

Nancy retired from the SEC a few years ago.

LEGISLATION REPORTS

National Legislation – Jim Hathaway

Happy New Year to All. This month's report will comment on four topics of interest to current and former Federal employees.

FAIRNESS ACT (H.R. 82/S. 597). The Social Security Fairness Act aims to repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO), two Social Security penalties that have burdened retired public servants for four decades.

With bipartisan support from over 300 cosponsors, and counting (as of November 2023), this bill is eligible for the House Consensus Calendar rule process, requiring committee advancement or a floor vote. Rep. Garrett Graves (R-LA) has indicated he was holding off on setting that process in motion in an effort to work with the House Ways and Means Committee on a path forward.

Recent developments have bolstered the effort. Almost 100 members of Congress have formally requested that the committee hold a hearing on H.R. 82. This move is a testament to the growing support for the legislation. The WEP/GPO repeal is vital for those on fixed incomes, including teachers, first responders, and state employees. The upcoming committee hearing is a promising opportunity to advance this legislation and offer relief to those affected by these unfair penalties. It is important that NARFE members continue to urge bi-partisan support in both chambers.

FEDERAL RETIREMENT FAIRNESS ACT (H.R. 5995). The Federal Retirement Fairness Act (FRFA), reintroduced by a bipartisan group of House Members, holds hope for federal workers who embarked on their careers as temporary employees after 1988. This pivotal legislation offers a solution by allowing temporary workers to make catch-up retirement contributions, ensuring their “temporary” work counts toward their retirement. NARFE believes that retirees should be rewarded for all their public service time. NARFE members can actively support this legislation by urging their representatives to support this vital measure.

FEDERAL EQUAL COLA ACT (H.R. 866/ S. 3194). The Equal COLA Act is vital legislation to rectify the disparities in cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) among federal retirees. The bill seeks to ensure that COLA increases are applied uniformly to all federal retirees, addressing a long-standing issue. In the latest development regarding this crucial legislation, Sen. Alex Padilla (D-CA) has introduced a Senate companion bill, S. 3194, to H.R. 866 in the House. This Senate bill can expedite the legislative process. In the House, H.R. 866 has 42 cosponsors, already more than the 34 cosponsors that the bill earned through the end of the previous Congress. NARFE wholeheartedly supports this legislation to secure full COLAs for all federal retirees.

FEDERAL LONG TERM CARE INSURANCE PROGRAM (FLTCIP) PREMIUMS. Starting in January 2024, FLTCIP enrollees will face substantial premium increases or benefit reductions. Over 265,000 federal workers and retirees will be affected. These premium hikes/benefit reductions, far exceeding initial quotes, raise concerns about the program’s promised stability. NARFE is calling for congressional hearings to “examine the reasons behind premium increases, authorize premium relief for affected enrollees, and recognize the federal government’s responsibility as the program’s sponsor to ensure fair and equitable treatment for enrollees.”

TELEWORK REFORM ACT OF 2023 (S. 3015). Introduced by Sen. James Lankford (R-OK), would amend Title 5 of the U.S. Code to address telework for federal employees and introduce reforms related to remote work arrangements.

The bill revises the definitions of “remote work” and “telework” to provide clear distinctions. “Remote work” refers to employees performing their duties from an approved worksite other than their usual location, which may include their residence. “Telework” encompasses remote work and extends to other approved worksites.

Agencies would need to consider changes in job scope, employee performance, and agency needs when renewing these agreements. Additionally, agencies would be required to provide training for managers and supervisors on remote work and telework, including reporting of employee remote work and telework usage.

S. 3015 focuses on enhancing telework and remote work opportunities for federal employees while ensuring transparency, accountability, and security in these arrangements. It emphasizes training, guidelines, and continuous evaluation to improve the telework experience for both employees and agencies.

State Legislation – Chris Gieseler

Virginia General Assembly Session. The 2024 Regular Session of the Virginia General Assembly will commence on Wednesday, January 10, 2024. This session will be for 60 days. The General Assembly will be considering the Governor’s December 20, 2023 budget proposal. The budget covers the period of July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2026. The General Assembly will consider other issues and can amend the current state budget. Both Houses of the General Assembly will have a significant number of new members; approximately 25% of each House. The Democrats now control both Houses of the Legislature, although by slim majorities.

VFN State Legislative Plan. The Virginia Federation of NARFE (VFN) has developed a State Legislative Plan that contains 4 legislative priorities:

- The highest of these priorities seeks tax relief for Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) retirees whose retirement benefits are fully taxed at the state level; whereas, Social Security benefits (such as those received by Federal Employee Retirement System retirees) are exempt from state tax. VFN notes that military retirement benefits can also be deducted from Virginia Adjusted Gross income (AGI) and believes that CSRS benefits should likewise be deductible, thus eliminating differentiation among federal retirement benefit systems.
- The second priority also deals with the unfair state-tax treatment of CSRS retirees. This priority pertains to the calculation of the “means-tested”, \$12,000 state-tax age deduction that seniors 65+ can claim if their adjusted Federal AGI (FAGI) is under \$50,000 for individuals/\$75,000 for joint filers. The deduction phases out as income exceeds those limits. Taxpayers who get Social Security benefits get to reduce (adjust) the FAGI by the amount of those benefits when calculating the deduction. By contrast, CSRS benefits cannot be subtracted when calculating the deduction. Thus, CSRS retirees will, more likely, not be eligible to claim the age deduction, compared to other Federal retirees. VFN’s position is that the means-testing limits should be eliminated.
- VFN also supports a family caregiver tax credit. An example of such a credit would limit it to \$1000 per caregiver for eligible expenditures, subject to certain conditions.
- Nursing Home priorities such as minimum staffing levels at nursing homes and living wages for nursing-home staff are among those supported by VFN.

The VFN State Legislative Team is now headed by Deborah Brown (1st Vice President and State Legislation Chair for the Brentwood, VA. NARFE Chapter 1697). Former Chair/Acting Chair Debbie Fisk will continue as a member of the team and will work with Ms. Brown to transition her to the role of Chair. Ms. Fisk has been meeting with various legislators, particularly on VFN’s tax-fairness priorities. Additional meetings are planned.

Anyone who would like a copy of the VFN 2024 Legislative Plan, please email me at cagieseleresq@gmail.com. While legislation is proposed and considered by the General Assembly, please urge your state legislators to support the VFN’s legislative priorities.

Inclement Weather Policy –Winter is here, and although we enjoyed mild weather over the holidays, we know bad weather will be around the corner. 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.

