

NARFE Chapter 1116 Newsletter

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

FEBRUARY 2024

Next Chapter Meeting
Tuesday, February 13, 2024
1:00 PM
Vienna Community Center (VCC)

Next Board Meeting
Thursday, February 22, 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

Board 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

Well, we had a taste of winter, and Punxsutawney Phil did not see his shadow on Groundhog Day so, according to folklore, that means we will have an early spring.

We will celebrate Valentine's Day at our Chapter Meeting on February 13th so wear your favorite red or pink attire. Our guest speaker is Lawrence MacDonald, the author of "Am I Too Old to Save the Planet?"

Several of us attended the NOVA Caucus Meeting on February 2 and listened to a presentation by Lindsey Mastis from WJLA Channel 7 about Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Plans are underway for the 2024 VFN Conference in Harrisonburg. See details on page 2.

We are also making plans for the celebration of our Chapter's 55th Anniversary in June 2024. It seems like just yesterday that we celebrated our 50th anniversary at American legion Post 180.

Kathy

MEMBERSHIP REPORT – JAYNE SEIDMAN

As of February 1, 2024, the membership for Chapter 1116 was as follows: Total Current Chapter members - 167, Total National Members in Chapter Area – 143, Grand Total = 310. We welcome our newest member Mary Ann Bruno to our Chapter. Hope to see her at our next meeting.

Incident 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

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

February 19 – President’s Day

February 29 – NARFE Webinar: **Maximize the Value of Your TSP** – Join Federal benefits expert Mark Keen to learn about whether Roth conversions of your Thrift Savings Plan (TSD) could benefit your tax situation. Register at www.narfe.org

March 12 – Chapter Meeting – VCC - 1 PM – Guest speaker - Mala Persaud – Trace Zero Waste – 140 Church Street NW, Vienna VA.

Explore sustainable, plastic-free living at Trace, Fairfax County's only bulk refill shop! They have a full range of dry foods, household cleaning supplies and eco-friendly household and personal items.



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

April 16 – Chapter Meeting - VCC - 1 PM - Report on VFN Conference. (This is the third Tuesday.)

May 14 – Chapter Meeting – VCC - 1 PM - annual ice cream social

June 11 – Celebration of Chapter’s 55th Anniversary – Location and time - TBD

2024 VFN Conference

The Virginia Federation of National Active and Retired Federal Employees (VFN) Conference will be held on April 7-10, 2024, in Harrisonburg, Virginia. We encourage all VFN members, retired and active Federal employees to join us.

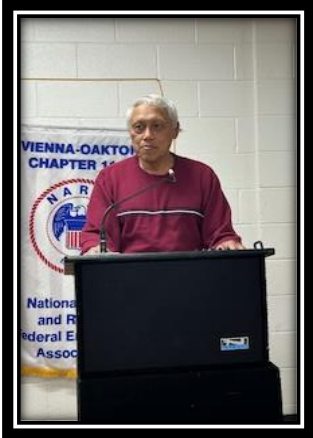
The following is some important preliminary information: Conference Dates: April 7-10, 2024 • Registration Hours: Sunday, April 7, 2:00 pm-5:00 pm; Monday, April 8, 7:30 am- 9:00 am, 12 noon-1:00 pm, 2:00 pm-5:00 pm; Tuesday, April 09, 8:00 am-12:00 noon • **Opening Session: Monday, April 8, 9:00 am** • Welcoming Reception: Monday, April 8, 7:00 pm • Banquet: Tuesday, April 9: Social Hour, 6:00-7:00 pm; Banquet, 7:00 to 10:00 • **Closing Session: Wednesday, April 10, 2024, 9:00 am-12 noon**. Registration fee includes Conference, Workshops, Welcome Reception, Banquet, and two lunches. We are offering an **“Early Bird Special”** if you register by **February 15, 2024**. Final registration deadline is March 15, 2024.

HOTEL INFORMATION Hotel Name Hotel Madison and Shenandoah Valley Convention Center 710 S. Main Street Harrisonburg, Virginia 22801 Telephone (540) 564-0200 Room Rate \$107.00 per night plus tax. **Deadline for reservations - March 7, 2024**. Group Name Virginia Federation of NARFE. Group Code Virginia Federation of NARFE. Check-In Sunday, April 7, 2024. Check Out Wednesday, April 10, 2024. Hotel rates are \$107/night plus tax and include free parking. Buffet breakfast is available onsite.

Please contact Kathy Arpa if you are interested in attending the VFN Conference.

REPORT ON JANUARY 9TH CHAPTER MEETING – NANCY BURKE-SANOW

Chapter President Kathy Arpa opened the Chapter meeting on January 9, 2024, at 1:06 pm, at the Vienna Community Center (VCC). There was a small but enthusiastic crowd who enjoyed the refreshments provided by Jayne Seidman and her team. Jim Hathaway led the pledge of allegiance. There were no birthdays to celebrate in December or January. Guest speaker was Mark Arpa, the Chapter's Alzheimer's Chair, who Ralph introduced by saying he was from the Philippines and liked to play musical instruments.



Mark Arpa, (pictured here) described his background with five years in medical school and his interest in science and physics and the need to understand Alzheimer's disease. Mark explained that Alzheimer's generally affects individuals aged 60 to 85 and is characterized by mild to moderate and finally severe symptoms. Mark noted that individuals with advanced Alzheimer's have problems with normal functions like swallowing leading to food going into the lungs and causing pneumonia. The cardiovascular system is most often also compromised leading to more life ending complications. Eventually multiple organ failure will occur. Mark explained the impact of Alzheimer's on the brain and noted that drugs for Alzheimer's are not very effective due to the BBB (blood brain barrier) which protects the brain and most drugs to slow down the progression of the disease result in brain hemorrhage. Mark noted that if you are in your 50's and start to forget things, it could be a sign of Alzheimer's. Mark

remarked that there is currently no cure for Alzheimer's. He noted that science underscores that a person should be physically healthy to prevent Alzheimer's. He further noted that people should not consume too much sugar and should try to stay healthy to forestall Alzheimer's, particularly because the immune system slows down as we age. Suggestions for forestalling Alzheimer's disease included learning a new language, learning to play an instrument, and be socially and physically active.

Following a 15–20-minute break, Dave Graf read the minutes of the November Chapter Meeting and Nancy Burke-Sanow read the minutes of the December meeting. Dave Graf gave the Treasurer's report. He mentioned he will be preparing the 2024 Budget for the next meeting and would like input from board members on any potential expenses. Jim Hathaway read the State Legislation report for Chris Gieseler (State Legislation chair) who was not in attendance as well as the National Legislation Report. Jayne Seidman gave the membership report. Ralph Dantinne announced the upcoming meetings for the Chapter, Caucus and the VFN Conference.

The meeting adjourned at 2:40 PM.

SERVICE OFFICER REPORT – KATHY ARPA

As many of you know, my brother passed away suddenly on December 29, 2023. Since my husband and I were in Pennsylvania at that time for New Year's weekend, we made his funeral arrangements. Unfortunately, he did not have a "Be Prepared for Life's Events" booklet which is available only to NARFE members. We had to use our own judgement to plan his military funeral. The "Be Prepared for Life Events" booklet is available to all NARFE members. You can fill it out online or order a copy from NARFE Headquarters. I have a few copies which I will bring to our next chapter meeting. You can call me to request a copy.



TREASURER'S REPORT - DAVE GRAF

Since the January Newsletter, the Chapter received \$109.88 for membership dues collected by NARFE's National Headquarters for December. Also \$10.00 was received from a new chapter member who was a national-only member.

There have been several expenses. The first expense was \$8.47 to reimburse Margaret Murphy for the purchase of paper id badges for use at our monthly meetings. The second expense was \$110.00 for the Chapter's full-page ad to be published in the Program Book for the VFN 2024 Conference to be held in April.

The 50/50 drawing for Alzheimer's Research raised \$17.50 at the January 9th Chapter Meeting. This donation was sent to the VFN Coordinator for the NARFE Alzheimer's Research Fund along with a member's \$500.00 IRA Distribution check that was received too late to credit for last year.

I drafted the Chapter Budget for Calendar Year 2024 and submitted it to the Board of Directors at their meeting on February 2, 2024. The Board approved the draft budget which will be submitted for adoption by the members at the February 13th Chapter Meeting. Income last year exceeded expenses by \$369.36. This is the fourth consecutive year in which expenses were less than the approved budget. Projected income for 2024 has been reduced by 10% due to the decrease in the number of chapter members. Proposed expenses for 2024 are similar to last year and include money to assist members who plan to attend the VFN Conference in Harrisonburg, VA in April and/or the FEDcon24 National Conference on August 18-20 in St. Louis, MO.

LEGISLATION REPORTS

National Legislation – Jim Hathaway

NARFE CONTINUES TO URGE ACTION ON WEP/GPO. NARFE National President William "Bill" Shackelford wrote to the members of the House Committee on Ways and Means, urging the committee to advance H.R. 82, the Social Security Fairness Act, to repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO). The letter comes amidst a push from NARFE's grassroots and direct advocacy – in coordination with congressional and organizational allies – to progress efforts to address WEP and GPO further through the congressional process. The committee has held a hearing on the topic. The repeal bill in the House has 306 cosponsors as of January 31st, the second highest number of cosponsors for any bill in Congress.

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 public servants for four decades.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING EXTENDED INTO MARCH. Congress passed another Continuing Resolution (CR), which extends fiscal year 2023 funding levels, ahead of the January 19 deadline to avoid a partial government shutdown. The new CR sets up another two-step deadline, with some agency funding extended through March 1, and the rest through March 8.

The CR passed the Senate 77-18, and then passed the House of Representatives 314-108. Had the bill not passed, funding for approximately 20% of the government would have expired. That 20% includes annual funding bills for Agriculture-FDA; Energy and Water; Military Construction-Veterans Affairs; and Transportation-Housing and Urban Development. This 20% now has a new deadline of March 1.

The remaining 80%, which was set to expire February 2 but has been extended to March 8, funds Defense; Labor-HHS; Legislative Branch; Commerce-Justice-Science; Financial Services and General Government; Homeland Security; Interior-Environment; and State-Foreign Ops.

There are many independent agencies included in the Financial Services and General Government appropriation. Here are some examples:

- The Office of Personnel Management (OPM): is an independent agency that serves as the chief human resources agency and personnel policy manager for the Federal Government. It also administers the CSRS and FERS retirement programs, as well as the FEHB and FEGLI insurance programs.
- Federal Communications Commission (FCC): Regulates all interstate and international communications in the US and territories.
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA): Provides assistance to people affected by disasters and emergencies.
- National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA): Conducts research and development in space exploration, aeronautics, and related fields.
- National Science Foundation (NSF): Supports research and education in all non-medical fields of science and engineering.
- Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC): Regulates commercial nuclear power plants and other uses of nuclear materials, such as in medicine and industry.

Note: This is not an exhaustive list, and there are many other independent agencies in the US Government.

FOCUS ON BUDGET TURNS BACK TO APPROPRIATIONS BILLS. Provisions to roll back telework to pre-pandemic levels and bar enforcement of Biden administration Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility initiatives could again complicate passing a key bill for federal employee programs.

Congress has more time to work on agency budgets for the current fiscal year by extending through March 1 temporary spending authority for departments and agencies falling under four of those appropriation bills and through March 8 for those under the other eight departments and agency appropriation bills.

The National Treasury Employees Union (NTEU) said that while a partial government shutdown again was avoided, “We are already more than one-quarter of the way through the 2024 fiscal year without full-year agency appropriations in place, depriving federal agencies of the additional resources they need and inhibiting long-term planning and hiring.”

Another impact of the continued delays of fiscal 2024 appropriations likely will be to push back the start of the budget cycle for fiscal year 2025 that starts on October 1, 2024.

Virginia State Legislation – Chris Gieseler

Presidential Primary Voting. Early voting has started for Virginia’s presidential primary, to be held on March 5, 2024. The Fairfax Board of Elections has been seeking Republicans to act as Election Officials for the primary. See the Board of Elections website [fairfaxcounty.gov/elections](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/elections) for further information.

State Legislation. The Virginia General Assembly began its 2024 Regular Session on January 10, 2024. More than 2,500 pieces of legislation have been introduced during the session. A few bills are pertinent to the Virginia Federation of NARFE’s 2024 Legislative Plan. These bills include HB 1078 and S 419, both of which would provide for a tax credit for family caregiver expenses.

Unfortunately, several of VFN's other legislative priorities have not been addressed. The two top priorities deal with (1) the establishment of a tax subtraction (deduction) for Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) benefits, and (2) the elimination of the means testing for the \$12,000 age deduction that is available for Virginia residents who are 65 years and older.

Regarding the first priority, no bills regarding subtractions for CSRS benefits have been introduced. However, several bills have been introduced that would establish subtractions for OTHER types of retirement income. For example, HB 518 would provide for such a subtraction/deduction for federal Foreign Retirement Benefits (but, oh no, not CSRS benefits). Other bills (HB 1292 and SB 662) would provide subtractions for retirement benefits of professional firefighters and state police officers. Additional bills (SB 651 and SB 10) would eliminate the age requirement (55 years old) for the subtraction of military retirement benefits and would broaden the scope of agencies considered "military" for purpose of the subtraction.

While it is disappointing to see that CSRS benefits will not be treated fairly, the bills introduced so far would provide logical support for future legislation to establish a CSRS deduction.

Moreover, no legislation specific to the other top priority (eliminating the means-testing for the age deduction) has been introduced, nor have any specific nursing-home care bills been introduced.

Lastly, our Chapter wants to thank Debbie Fisk for her services. She is transitioning away from VFN state legislative activities. We look forward to working with the new VFN State Legislation Chair Deborah Brown.

SUNSHINE REPORT – HARRIET EPSTEIN

We extend our sympathy to Jayne Seidman on the passing of her cousin and "Big Sister" Fern Bekenstein, and also to Fern's family.

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



February 13



February 14