



## NARFE Chapter 1116 Newsletter

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

### MARCH 2024

**Next Chapter Meeting**  
**Tuesday, March 12, 2024**  
**1:00 PM**

**Vienna Community Center (VCC)**

**Next Board Meeting**  
**Thursday, March 21, 2024**  
**1:00 PM**

**Vienna Community Center**

#### 2024 Board

##### Chapter Officers

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

1<sup>st</sup> 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

Despite the prediction for snow, once again we escaped, and we were able to hold our Chapter Meeting on February 13 at the Vienna Community Center. The Valentine's Day theme was prominent with the desserts, candy, and decorations. Thanks to Jayne Seidman for her festive touches and Ralph Dantine for the Valentine candy. Our guest speaker, Lawrence MacDonald, author of "Am I Too Old to Save the Planet?" shared his insight on how to reduce the impact of climate change. Many questions and comments followed his presentation. See the Secretary's Report on page 3. Dave Graf presented the 2024 Budget which was approved.

In less than two months we will gather in Harrisonburg for our 2024 VFN Conference. The Conference Committee has been working hard to get outstanding speakers. The registration fee includes the Conference, Workshops, Welcome Reception, Banquet, and two lunches. Three of us plan to attend the Chapter. I am serving as the Supporter Chair for the Conference, processing checks and preparing the list of supporters for the Conference Program Book. Mark will serve as the Conference Photographer and will provide music at the Memorial Service.

We are planning our 55th Chapter anniversary for June 11, 2024. Watch future newsletters for details.

We will be celebrating **St. Patrick's Day** at our Chapter Meeting on March 12<sup>th</sup>. **Wear your GREEN!**

*Kathy*

### MEMBERSHIP REPORT – JAYNE SEIDMAN

As of February 29, 2024, the membership for Chapter 1116 was as follows: Total Current Chapter members: 167, Total National Members in Chapter Area: 140, Grand Total = 307.

## COMING UP



**March 10 – Daylight Savings Time Begins** -- Move clocks **ahead 1 hour.**

**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.

**March 17** – St. Patrick's Day

**March 19** – Spring Begins

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

**April 16** – Chapter Meeting - VCC - 1 PM – Guest speaker - Derick Malis, President, Lifetime Learning Institute (LLI/NOVA). LLI sponsors 2-hour presentations (in person and/or on Zoom) of all types of areas of potential interest to NARFE members and sponsors other events and activities (trips to foreign countries, etc.). Kathy will also report on the VFN Conference. **(This is on the third Tuesday.)**

**May 14** – Chapter Meeting – VCC - 1 PM -- Guest speaker – Linda Colbert, Mayor of Vienna. Also, we will have the **annual ice cream social.**

**June 11** – Celebration of Chapter's 55<sup>th</sup> Anniversary – Location and time - TBD

## 2024 VFN Conference

The Virginia Federation of National Active and Retired Federal Employees (VFN) Conference will be held April 7-10, 2024, in Harrisonburg, Virginia. We encourage all VFN members, retired and active Federal employees to join us. See our January newsletter for details or go to [www.vanarfe.org](http://www.vanarfe.org) and look under 2024 VFN Conference.

## SUNSHINE REPORT – HARRIET EPSTEIN

We are sending get well wishes to Shirley Martin who fell in February and broke her hip. She is at home, with a daytime aide, recovering bit-by-bit. She would enjoy receiving a phone call on 703-938-6580. We also wish our National Legislation Chair Jim Hathaway a speedy recovery from recent surgery.

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

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## REPORT OF FEBRUARY 13<sup>th</sup> CHAPTER MEETING – NANCY BURKE-SANOW

Chapter President Kathy Arpa called the Chapter meeting to order on February 13, 2024, at 1:04 pm at the Vienna Community Center (VCC). Kathy introduced new member MaryAnn Bruno. Happy birthday was sung for those members who were born in January and February.



Harriet Epstein introduced the guest speaker Lawrence MacDonald, a passionate climate activist and author of the book “Am I Too Old to Save the Planet?”. He asked, “Who is worried about climate change?” and whether anyone in the audience has had a job related to the environment. Mr. MacDonald noted the protest culture of the 1960’s and its participation in the first Earth Day. He remarked that most people “dropped the ball” regarding climate change because the fossil fuel industry promoted the notion that climate change was not an issue.



Mr. MacDonald noted that carbon dioxide emissions have been scientifically proven to impact climate change. He further noted that China has now surpassed the United States as the main emitter of emissions. Mr. MacDonald remarked that the last two-thirds of his book discusses actions that must be taken to reduce the impact of climate change, including installing solar panels, reducing methane gas leaks, and eating less meat. He remarked that both China and the United States need to take the lead on climate change. The presentation ended with a Q & A session. This was followed by a break during which members talked with Mr. MacDonald and enjoyed an array of goodies provided by Hostess Jayne Seidman.

The business meeting began at 2:05 p.m. The highlights were:

- Shirley Martin, who is 97 years old, fell and broke her hip. She is expected to return home today. Kathy circulated a card for members to sign.
- Dave Graf presented the Treasurer’s Report and the proposed Chapter Budget for 2024. He noted that the only source of income is dues. For the past four years, expenses were less than the approved budget amounts and less than the dues income. Dave then described the proposed expenses for 2024, including money to assist members who plan to attend the VFN Conference in April and/or the FEDcon24 National NARFE Conference in August. A motion to adopt the proposed Chapter Budget was approved.
- Membership Chair Jayne Seidman reported that the Chapter has 167 members.
- Chris Gieseler read the National Legislation Report on behalf of Jim Hathaway. He then presented the State Legislation Report. Chris stated that the VFN had five legislative priorities, including revising state income tax treatment for CSRS retirees. Bills to address legislative priorities either were not passed by the legislature or were not introduced.
- Kathy stated that the March NARFE magazine contains an article that five new research grants for Alzheimer’s Research have been awarded.
- The next Chapter meeting will be held on March 12, 2024, with a presentation by the owner of the Zero Waste Store in Vienna.
- The April NARFE Chapter meeting will be held on the **3rd Tuesday of April** due to the VFN Conference the prior week.

- Planning has begun to celebrate the Chapter's 55th anniversary in June. Program Chair Ralph Dantine discussed his contact with Mulligan's Pub on the Green (located near Fair Oaks Mall). Several other locations are being pursued. The event is to be held on Tuesday, June 11th, in lieu of the annual Chapter Picnic.
- Margaret Murphy conducted the drawings for the 50/50 raffle for Alzheimer's Research and for two chocolate valentines that were donated by Ralph.

The meeting adjourned at 2:55 pm.

### **TREASURER'S REPORT - DAVE GRAF**

Since the February Newsletter, the Chapter received \$59.88 for membership dues collected by NARFE's National Headquarters for January. There have not been any expenses.

The 50/50 drawing for Alzheimer's Research raised \$12.50 at the February 13th Chapter Meeting. This donation was sent to the VFN Coordinator for the NARFE Alzheimer's Research Fund. The total contribution for this year is \$530.00, including a member's \$500.00 IRA Distribution check that was received too late to credit for last year.

The proposed Chapter Budget for 2024, which had been approved on February 1st by the Board, was submitted for adoption by the members at the February 13th Chapter Meeting. The proposed budget was adopted. Like last year, it includes money to assist members who plan to attend the VFN Convention in April and/or the FEDcon24 National Conference in August.

### **SERVICE OFFICER REPORT – SUSAN LARSON**

The Internal Revenue Service and Security Summit partners alerted tax professionals of a scam email impersonating various software companies in an attempt to steal Electronic Filing Identification Numbers (EFINs).

The IRS warned that scammers are posing as tax software providers and requesting EFIN documents from tax professionals under the guise of a required verification to transmit tax returns. These thieves attempt to steal client data and tax preparers' identities, creating the potential to file fraudulent tax returns for refunds.

"With filing season underway, scammers use this time of year to target tax professionals as well as taxpayers in hopes of stealing information that can be used to try filing fraudulent tax returns," said IRS Commissioner Danny Werfel. "The IRS and the Security Summit partners have noticed a new surge of an EFIN scam email that targets professionals. This scam serves as a powerful reminder that tax professionals should ensure strong security at their practices, including reminding employees to be careful with any emails coming in that could be posing as an official communication. A little extra caution can mean a world of difference for tax professionals during this busy period."

The IRS has already received dozens of reports of the scam targeting tax professionals. They should be alert for a scam email that includes a U.S.-based area code for faxing EFIN documents and also provides instructions on obtaining EFIN documentation from the IRS e-Services site if unavailable. Scam variations being seen using different fax numbers for software vendors. Other warning signs of a scam include inconsistencies in the email wording and a German footer in the email.

## LEGISLATION REPORTS

### National Legislation – Jim Hathaway

#### 118TH CONGRESS: STATUS OF NARFE'S LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Reports previously presented were focused on specific NARFE national legislative priorities or congressional actions important at that time. This month's report briefly discusses each of the eight priorities NARFE is focused on this congressional year.

**Oppose Cuts to Earned Federal Retirement and Health Benefits.** In exchange for years of hard work, federal employees and retirees were promised retirement annuities and retiree health care. These benefits were earned fairly and paid for and should not be altered in retirement. Doing so would deprive federal retirees of security of their health and finances. Past proposals have sought to reduce or eliminate cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs), decrease the government share of health insurance premiums, reduce the initial retirement benefit for those approaching retirement, and reduce the rate of return on federal civilian and military retiree savings in the Thrift Savings Plan. NARFE strongly opposes these proposals and urges that they be non-starters in future budget negotiations.

**Support Repeal or Reform of the WEP and GPO.** The Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) unfairly reduces earned Social Security benefits based on government employment. The Government Pension Offset (GPO) unfairly reduces or eliminates the Social Security benefits government retirees could collect based on their spouse's work record by two-thirds of their own government pension. NARFE supports fully repealing the WEP and the GPO via passage of the Social Security Fairness Act (H.R. 82/S.597) or efforts to reform the WEP and GPO, as even partial relief would represent a substantial improvement over the status quo.

**Support for Full COLAs for Federal Retirees.** NARFE supports providing Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) annuitants with an annual COLA equal to the relevant CPI increase via passage of the Equal COLA Act (H.R. 866/ S. 3194). Current law holds the FERS COLA at 2 percent if the full COLA falls between 2 and 3 percent, and it reduces FERS COLAs by one percentage point if the full COLA exceeds 3 percent. This inequitable policy, enacted in the 1980s with the creation of FERS, fails to fully protect the earned value of FERS annuities. NARFE also stands against efforts to base COLAs for federal annuities and Social Security with the flawed Chained Consumer Price Index (CPI). This switch would reduce earned benefits and fail to keep pace with the true cost increases that retirees experience.

**Strengthen the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) Retirement Services (RS) Division.** NARFE is concerned with significant retirement processing delays and the inability of annuitants and their families to call OPM to receive needed assistance. NARFE supports including language in the Financial Services and General Government appropriations that would require publication of 1) retirement claims and benefit change processing times, 2) call center response rates, and 3) quarterly congressional briefings on these issues. NARFE supports continued congressional oversight to push OPM to modernize processes and technology to improve customer service levels, and to provide adequate funding for OPM RS to do so.

**Protection for Enrollees in the Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program.** After enduring premium increases with the last two contract renewals of the Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program (FLTCIP), enrollees will face yet another premium increase, likely well beyond the limit of what they expected when they enrolled in the program. (For more information, email NARFE's Advocacy Department at [advocacy@narfe.org](mailto:advocacy@narfe.org).) This creates an unfair, and financially burdensome situation for enrollees, forcing them to either cancel their coverage and forfeit the premiums already paid or take on significantly higher premiums to retain their coverage.

As such, **NARFE** supports allowing enrollees the option of a partial refund of their premiums rather than forcing them to pay yet another premium increase. **NARFE** also supports introduction of legislation to provide relief from FLTCIP premium increases above the quoted amounts via tax credits or tax deductions.

**Support Improved Integration of Medicare with the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program.**

Federal annuitants enrolled in both FEHB and Medicare Part B pay two sets of premiums for overlapping, and often duplicative, coverage. While they benefit from lower cost sharing payments (deductibles, copayments, and coinsurance), they pay more up front. For this reason, many federal annuitants decline Medicare Part B. **NARFE** continues to oppose mandatory Medicare B enrollment. Furthermore, most FEHB plans provide prescription drug coverage in lieu of Medicare Part D. This leaves FEHB on the hook for a greater amount of retiree health insurance coverage than most employer-sponsored plans, thus raising costs for the entire program. Improving coordination between FEHB and Medicare – without shifting costs onto retirees – would help increase Medicare enrollment and reduce costs for both FEHB and enrollees. **NARFE** supports expanding reimbursement for Part B premiums (as some FEHB plans currently do), waiving Part B late enrollment fees for individuals covered by FEHB, and ensuring FEHB plans gain access to any prescription drug pricing negotiated by the Department of Health and Human Services for the Medicare program. This would allow FEHB plans to integrate with Medicare Part D and ensure that FEHB/PSHB participants also receive adequate reimbursement for any Income Related Monthly Adjustment Amount (IRMAA) they must pay. Some of these changes may be implemented via administrative action, but **NARFE** urges legislation.

**Support Market Rate Increases to Federal Pay Rates / Oppose Federal Employee Compensation Cuts.**

Federal pay rates must be competitive to recruit and retain a well-qualified and high performing workforce. To maintain competitive pay rates, **NARFE** supports an increase of at least 5.2 percent, on average, for the calendar year 2025. Furthermore, the competitiveness of federal compensation should not be undermined by benefit cuts. **NARFE** opposes proposals such as increased contributions towards retirement – which is nothing more than an immediate across-the-board pay cut.

**Improving Government Operations and Protecting the Merit System.** **NARFE** supports efforts to modernize federal human capital management, from hiring process reforms to performance management improvements, to ensure effective and efficient government operations. But **NARFE** stands firmly against any attempts to undermine the merit based Civil Service, a system that ensures federal employees are hired and fired based on their competence, rather than political connections or lack thereof. **NARFE** supports the Saving the Civil Service Act (H.R. 1002/S.399) and the Chance to Compete Act (H.R. 159/S.59).

**Virginia State Legislation – Chris Gieseler**

**The 2024 Regular Session of the Virginia General Assembly** will conclude on March 9, 2024. Efforts are still ongoing regarding the Budget Bills. State taxes, a sports arena in Alexandria, and other issues are still in play. A large number of bills on lots of issues have been passed by the General Assembly, but it is not clear how many bills have actually been sent to the Governor yet. The Governor will have 30 days from the end of the legislative session to act on the bills (approve, veto, send back with recommendations or objections) or the bill becomes law.

This session was not a good one for tax issues, including the issues that the Virginia Federation of **NARFE** had been advocating in its 2024 Legislative Plan. I searched the General Assembly's legislative tracking system for bills relating to income taxes. I located 32 bills, and I selected 20 bills to review that might be relevant for our Chapter's members. With one exception, none of those bills passed either house—they were left in committee, were continued to 2025, or were passed over indefinitely. One bill, dealing with conformity with the IRS Code, passed the House but was left in a Senate committee.

I'll keep my eye open for bills of interest and will report on them at future Chapter meetings and newsletters.