

National Active & Retired Federal Employees Association

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**Meetings: 2nd Wed of Month Sept through May (except December) Beech Rm, Lubber Run Community Ctr, 300 N. Park Dr., Arlington - 12:15 p.m.**

***President's Message***

*By Pat Meyers*

This month I wish each of you a Happy St. Patrick's Day as well as a happy and blessed Easter. We missed those of you who were unable to attend our February meeting. In addition to a great program, you missed chocolate-covered strawberries. I do apologize for our inability to announce a program in the last newsletter. While we had requested a speaker on senior heart health from the American Heart Association (AHA), we found out belatedly that they could not do, so we moved to plan B. Thanks to Virginia Hospital Center's Senior Health Department, we obtained a very fine speaker on cardiovascular health. Shayquilla Vasquez-Clark is a cardiac nurse navigator with Caregivers Home Health and has a doctorate as a Nurse Practitioner. She was well-versed in cardio health issues and was able to answer a variety of questions on heart issues as well as home health care and Medicare issues. The AHA did provide us some good resource materials which we'll bring to our next meeting.

March is National PAC month as you likely know from our latest NARFE magazine plus e-mails. NARFE is ramping up to support candidates in 2024 who are sympathetic to and support legislation and issues affecting federal employees and retirees. The office of Advocacy is requesting members to contact their legislators re the bills in Congress. We have requested a speaker from the Advocacy department at NARFE to make a presentation at our March 13th meeting on 2024 goals. As of this writing, we are still waiting for confirmation. For anyone who may wish to contribute to NARFE PAC during March, there will be forms available at the meeting. See page 2 for more information about the PAC.

There is still time to register for the VFN Conference in April in Harrisonburg. So far, there are four individuals planning to attend. The final deadline for registration is March 15th and the deadline for room reservations is March 7th. There is also time to donate items valued at \$50 or more for the silent auction to benefit Alzheimer's research.

Save the date of June 12, 2024 for our summer luncheon. Also a big thank you to Dan Perch and Rita Rutsohn for agreeing to serve on the audit committee this year. I hope to see many of you at our March meeting.

***Legislative Corner***

*By Ed Weiler*

**NARFE Calls Upon All Members to Oppose Bills to Establish  
New Fiscal Commission (H.R. 5779 and S. 3262)**

It's back to the future on Capitol Hill. Who could forget those dark days back in December 2010, when the *National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform* launched its official report, "The Moment of Truth,"

with its proposed cuts in benefits for Federal workers and retirees (e.g., “voucherization” of the FEHBP)? While most of these proposed cuts never happened, the Commission’s deliberations led to passage of the *Budget Control Act* in 2011, which set the stage for budget caps and years of heated wrangling on Capitol Hill over appropriations.

With the passage of time, the budget fights subsided to a low boil, albeit with periodic flare-ups. Yet, as noted in this column back in October 2023, Congress has not been able to resolve the Federal Government’s deteriorating fiscal position. Instead, what has evolved (according to a *Wall Street Journal* article of 9/14/23) is a, “---tacit, politically popular consensus [that] keeps tax revenue as a share of the economy either flat or declining, while spending’s share rises, [the result being] a permanent budget imbalance that both parties bemoan but neither seems eager to change.”

It is precisely this inability of Congress to come to grips with the Federal Government’s deteriorating fiscal position that has led once again to a call by some for a fiscal commission, as provided in *H.R. 5779/S.3262*. But before going further, a reality check is in order. Do we in fact have a dire fiscal problem? If one can believe the estimates coming from a Feb. 2024 Congressional Budget Office (CBO) report, we certainly do. As summarized in a recent e-mailed newsletter from the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget (CRFB, 2/20/24): “Budget deficits are projected to grow from \$1.7 trillion in FY23 to \$2.6 trillion by 2034, according to CBO’s latest projections. Nominal spending will rise from \$6.4 trillion this year to \$10.1 trillion by FY34, and 84% of this growth can be explained by increased spending on health, social security, and net interest.”

Given the enormity of this looming fiscal challenge, forestalling the establishment of a fiscal commission might prove to be a heavy lift on the Hill. However, as NARFE rightly points out in a recent Advocacy Alert (see: [www.narfe.org/advocacy](http://www.narfe.org/advocacy)), recourse to a fiscal commission is tantamount to an outsourcing of Congressional responsibility (and by extension, accountability). Nevertheless, the aforementioned stalemate between the tax-cutters and the program-spenders argues for an *ad hoc* workaround outside of Congress, hence the appealing logic of an independent commission.

So where does this leave us? Even if our efforts to prevent the establishment of a fiscal commission should fail, forceful advocacy in this regard will put our Congress(wo)men and Senators on notice that the benefits of Federal workers and retirees should not be used as a slush fund for any scheme to right the fiscal ship.

As a footnote, it’s worth mentioning that one of the nine original co-sponsors of *S. 3262* is Virginia Sen. Mark Warner. Moreover, his co-sponsorship appears to be consistent with the fact that he has yet to sign on as a co-sponsor of *S. 597*, which is the Senate’s companion of the House’s bill for full repeal of the WEP-GPO (*i.e.*, *H.R. 82*). Presumably, fiscal worries are at issue in both instances. I point this out, not to malign Sen. Warner—in fact he has been a supporter of Federal workers and retirees over the years I’ve been writing this column. At the same time, as a member of the Senate Finance Committee, however, Sen. Warner must juggle a vast array of competing demands for Federal resources. Thus, in any bill that might spring from a fiscal commission, should one actually be established, our job is to help him strike the **right** balance.

### **March is NARFE -PAC Month**

NARFE-PAC (Political Action Committee) is the best way for you to support Fed-friendly candidates running for Congress. Last year over 13,000 NARFE members contributed over \$750,000 to NARFE-PAC. This included 394 Virginia NARFE chapter members who contributed over \$29,000. Our own Chapter 7 had 24 members who contributed over \$2,800. These funds provided support to several Virginia lawmakers including Senator Tim Kaine, Rep. Gerry Connolly and Rep/ Jennifer Wexton. (*continued on p. 3*)

NARFE-PAC has established goals for the 2023-2024 cycle, which include raising \$1,600,000 from NARFE members, disbursing \$1,200,000 in political contributions and sending NARFE members to 125 local fundraisers. We hope you will consider making a contribution this month. A strong NARFE-PAC better positions NARFE and increases the opportunities for NARFE to raise awareness of our most pressing concerns.

### ***VFN Conference Silent Auction***

*By Nancy Palmerino*

At the VFN Conference there will be a Silent Auction for Alzheimer's research. The committee is looking for donations with a minimum value of \$50. Items that have been popular in the past are jewelry, wine, original paintings, collectibles, timeshares, gift cards and baskets. Now is the perfect time to get a start on your spring cleaning and go through cabinets and drawers, and maybe even visit the basement and the attic and discover treasures you forgot you even possessed. Call Nancy Palmerino at 703-243-6546 if you have any questions or to arrange a pick up. Donations may also be brought to the March meeting. All donations must be received by April 1 and are tax deductible.

### ***Program Ideas Needed***

Is there a topic that you would like to know more about? It could be a service/function (County or non-County), something related specifically to NARFE, local history or any other topic. Did you have an interesting job or experience that you would like to share with the group? Do you have a hobby that you would like to discuss? We are always on the lookout for interesting program ideas. Contact any member of the board at a meeting or using the contact information below.

Please consider filling one of our committee vacancies to help our chapter move forward in 2024. Your Board can't do it all and we invite you to actively participate in decision-making that affects our members. Vacancies exist in the following areas crucial to the chapter: programs, membership, Alzheimer's, public relations, and newsletter, just to name a few. Co-chairs are also welcome. Please let us know if you would be interested in helping or have questions.

### ***Be Prepared for Life's Events: What Your Survivors Should Know***

Is this the year you're going to get your papers organized? NARFE, with some sponsorship from GEHA has put together the guide *Be Prepared for Life Events: What Your Survivors Should Know* (Form F-100). 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. This document can be filled out online, downloaded and saved and printed. To access, log in to *narfe.org*, click on For Members, click on Download or Order Forms, scroll down to F-100 and click to access the form.

### ***Alzheimer's Report***

*By Nancy Palmerino*

We've set a goal of \$1,500 in donations for this year and are off to a good start with \$40 collected in January and \$45 collected at our February meeting, bringing our total for the year to \$85. Remember that we are also collecting that loose change that is accumulating in your piggy bank/dish or in your purse, and will gladly accept it at any time.

## Membership Report

By Nancy Palmerino

We currently have 275 Chapter members and an additional 440 National members in our chapter area for a total of 715 Chapter and National members. Our chapter memberships include 63 1-year members, 36 2-year members, 101 3-year members, 64 dues withholding members and 11 Life members.

### Contact Information

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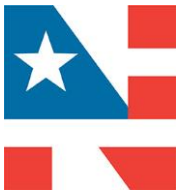
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