

National Active & Retired Federal Employees Association

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

Spring greetings to all of you. Isn't it great to see the trees budding and flowers peeking out? And I love the longer days! It was good to see so many of you at our March meeting to hear Nicole Blackstone's presentation on NARFE advocacy as well as information about the Service Benefit Department. We were pleased to welcome Gaston Gianni, VFN's National Legislation Chair as well as our new member, Karen Isaac who has moved to our area from Florida.

Our April meeting will feature Michelle Thomas, MPA, who is the coordinator of the Virginia Insurance Counseling and Assistance Program (VICAP), Arlington Aging and Disability Programs, DHS. Her presentation will discuss Medicare and home health care. Specifically, she will discuss what services are covered, who's eligible and your Medicare rights. Some confusion also exists as to care coverage, whether under Part A or Part B of Medicare, and Michelle will be able to provide clarification. Please join us for this important program.

Since I will be returning from the VFN conference on the day of our meeting, I will not be able to attend, much to my disappointment. However, you will be in the capable hands of Ed Weiler, our 1st VP/Legislation Chair and the rest of the Board. I look forward to briefing you about the Conference next month.

Area X VP Ted Pasek led a group discussion by Zoom on March 22nd about chapter meetings. Secretary Nancy Palmerino and I attended as did other chapter leaders and several members. The discussion centered around what attracts members to meetings, possible reasons for non-attendance, what is best and least liked about meetings, and the possibility of combining chapters for special meetings. Good programs were noted as the main reason for attendance with networking and lunch (for those chapters doing luncheon meetings) also attractions. Among the least desirable traits of meetings were speakers who talked too long, overly long business meetings, meeting location and luncheon costs. Although It's a very busy season for everyone, I wish more of you could have joined us. I would ask that you consider giving your thoughts on any or all of the above items to Nancy, me, or any other Board member. This is your chapter, and we want to meet expectations and increase participation. We welcome your comments, whether by e-mail, phone or at meetings.

Legislative Corner

By Ed Weiler

**House Committee on Oversight & Accountability Marks Up
The *Delinking Revenue from Unfair Gouging Act (H.R. 6283)***

While it has become commonplace to denigrate Congress as a "do-nothing" body, due in no small part to its inability to come to agreement on several high-profile issues (e.g., immigration reform), useful work

(continued from p. 1) nevertheless goes on daily far from the glare of TV cameras and the reach of social media chatter. Case in point: (*H.R. 6283*), which passed out of House Oversight & Accountability back in February, with support from NARFE (see President Shackelford's letter to the Committee, available on the Advocacy page of NARFE's website @www.narfe.org).

Unlike the drug-specific approach toward countering high prescription drug prices taken under the *Inflation Reduction Act* (whereby selected drugs have been singled out for price negotiation under Medicare), *H.R. 6283* goes after certain practices of pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) that are deemed to result in unduly high drug costs across the board. Should this bill become law, PBMs would be reimbursed for their services (*i.e.*, managing prescription programs for health care insurance providers) on a flat-fee basis; and concomitantly, profiting from price differentials between drug manufacturers and pharmacies would be prohibited. Also prohibited would be "steering," whereby a PBM "steers" the patient toward purchasing his/her prescription from a firm under the same corporate ownership. Moreover, as Shackelford noted: "By eliminating preferences for affiliated pharmacies, the bill would prevent PBMs from restricting or penalizing patient choices based on PBM profits."

Prospects for passage in the 118th, you might ask? Let's start with the glass half-full side. *H.R. 6283* was introduced by a House Republican (Rep. Marianne Miller-Meeks, R-IA-1), and to date has attained 20 co-sponsors (12 Rs, 8 Ds). So far, 2 Virginia House members have signed on as co-sponsors (Rep. Abigail Spanberger, D-VA-7, and Rep. Jennifer Kiggans, R-VA-2). To date, Rep Beyer (D-VA-8) has not signed on, and could use a nudge from Chapter 7 members.

Now let's get to the glass half-empty side. When first introduced back in November 2023, *H.R.6283* was referred to **FOUR** committees. As noted above, Oversight & Accountability has already marked up this bill. But getting three other committees---especially Ways & Means---to take it up in the remainder of what promises to be a stormy year on the Hill could be a stretch. All the more reason you should contact Rep. Beyer, since he sits on Ways and Means.

On a closing note, I would be remiss if I did not put in a plug for NARFE. So far as I can tell, there has been no *H.R. 6283* coverage by the mainstream press. Take comfort in the thought there is an organization on the Hill keeping us informed and looking out for our interests. Spread the word

Protect our Letter Carriers Act (*H.R. 7629*)

Sadly, it's come to this. In response to rising physical and gun-related assaults on US Postal Service letter carriers, *H.R.7629* (introduced on 3/14/24) would: (1) appropriate Federal funds to replace the outdated collection boxes and arrow keys, which are often targeted in robberies; (2) require all US. Attorney's offices to designate a prosecutor for Postal crime; and (3) review the US Sentencing Guidelines for Postal crimes.

As with *H.R. 6283*, this bill has bipartisan support, having been introduced by Democrat, Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (PA-1), and co-sponsored by 3 Ds and 2 Rs. Not surprisingly, it is strongly supported by both of the unions which represent letter carriers. When you contact Rep. Beyer to request his co-sponsorship of *H.R. 6283*, ask him to co-sponsor *H.R. 7629* as well.

Keeping Those Enhanced Standard Deduction Amounts For Virginia's State Income Tax (*HB88* and *SB108*)

Fresh off tax filing season, you are no doubt attuned to terms like "Virginia adjusted income," "Virginia taxable income," etc.---and if you are like me, once again grateful for the new-ish higher standard deduction levels that

(continued from p. 2) came into being a few years back. Don't get too used to them, however, since they are slated to revert to the much lower pre-2019 levels (\$3k single; \$6k married) come January 1, 2026, unless they are legislatively reauthorized. Enter *HB88/SB108*, introduced during the 2024 Session of the General Assembly (GA), which would have done just that. While the GA didn't say *yea*, it didn't say *nay*, either. Instead, the Finance committees in both the House and Senate voted unanimously to reconsider these bills in the 2025 Session.

On the one hand, I've heard that postponement is merely a quiet way of strangling the proverbial baby in the crib, and hoping that no one will notice. On the other, I've also been told that the Virginia General Assembly has a long tradition of chewing over ('er, carefully considering) tax legislation before acting on it.

So, just maybe.... And unless you have no problem with the prospect of losing several thousands of dollars' worth of deductions, you need to do some lobbying. As luck would have it, both Sens. Favola (D-40) and Ebbin (D-39) sit on Senate Finance; and nearly all Chapter 7 members reside within one or the other of these two districts. On the House side, Del. Rip Sullivan, Jr. (D), whose District 6 contains at least some Chapter 7 members, also sits on that body's Finance Committee. Between now and 2025, call and/or write. Need I say more?

VFN Conference

By Nancy Palmerino

As Pat mentioned in her President's Message, she, and others from the chapter will be attending the VFN Conference in Harrisonburg. The chapter is also supporting the conference by having a full-page ad in the program booklet, contributing more than \$300 from our members and donating several items for the silent auction for Alzheimer's research. Thanks to all for your support.

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. We collected \$55 at our March meeting bringing our total for the year to \$140. 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.

Try These Brain Games – Messages from your brain travel along your nerves at up to 200 miles an hour! Play along with these clips from Brain Games, the National Geographic Channel show that messes with your mind and reveals the inner-workings of your brain.

National Geographic Brain Games;

<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/videos/topic/brain-games>

152 Visual Phenomena and Optical Illusions with explanations by Michael Bach;

<https://michaelbach.de/ot/>

Membership Report

By Nancy Palmerino

We are saddened to report the passing of longtime member Florence Koep and extend our deepest sympathies to her family. We currently have 273 Chapter members and an additional 438 National members in our chapter area for a total of 711 Chapter and National members. Our chapter memberships include 61 1-year members, 36 2-year members, 101 3-year members, 64 dues withholding members and 11 Life members.

NARFE Membership Renewal – When you renew your NARFE membership, be sure to check the box to renew your Chapter 7 membership. Chapter dues are only \$10/year, and fund printing and mailing the newsletter, labels, postage, lunches for guest speakers and other expenses. You don't want to miss out on the fellowship, great programs, and newsletter each month.

Keep Your Records Up-To-Date with NARFE - If you move, change your email address, or change your telephone number, notify NARFE. This enables you to receive NARFE Magazine and email communications from both national headquarters and Chapter 7. This can be done 1) Online, at the NARFE website www.narfe.org – log in and click “My Account” 2) Email NARFE at memberrecords@narfe.org 3) Telephone toll-free 1 800 456-8410 or 4) Contact Nancy Palmerino at 703-243-6546.

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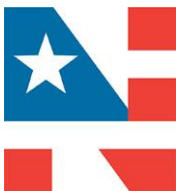
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