

April 2024



MANASSAS CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

NARFE Chapter 356, Manassas, VA - Organized September 9, 1953

Chapter email:
narfe356@hotmail.com

Next Meeting Date

April 17

Bob Evans
10830 Promenade Ln.,
Manassas, VA

Lunch
11:30 AM

Program
12:30 PM

Bob Evans is located at the intersection of Sudley and Balls Ford Roads. Parking entrance is at rear of restaurant on Promenade Lane next to Sonic Drive-in.

Future Meetings:

Chapter luncheon meetings are held on the third Wednesday of the month. Beginning in 2024, we will meet bimonthly on the even numbered months.

June 19—Speaker TBD

August 21—Speaker TBD

Our Executive Committee will continue meeting virtually on the first Tuesday of each month.

Mystery of the Centreville Six, Jim Lewis, Civil War Historian

Our luncheon speaker will present a fascinating local story that has roots dating back to one of the earliest confrontations in the American Civil War. One hundred and thirty-three years later, a local relic hunter came across the skeletal remains of a Civil War soldier in what is today a well-known fast food restaurant's parking lot. Excavation and exhumation eventually took place, led by a team of archeologists and forensic anthropologists from Fairfax County and the Smithsonian Institution. What they found surprised everyone. Forensic analysis, followed by a 5-yr. painstaking research effort, finally brought a fitting closure for everyone.

Jim Lewis is a native 9th generation Northern Virginian. He graduated from George Mason University and retired from the Xerox Corporation. Jim is well known in the local area for his historical and preservation efforts. He has authored or updated 35+ historical markers in Fairfax County. Jim is kept busy with over 40 speaking/local tour engagements per year. His most popular subject matter pertains to the American Civil War and World War-II.

bership expires. I know that Chapter membership is now optional, but for an additional \$10 annual cost you receive this Newsletter each month, with informative updates on recent legislation impacting your pay and benefits, ever evolving new treatments for the detection and treatment of Alzheimer's, and information on upcoming NARFE webinars. We also provide an opportunity every other month to get together with other NARFE members and perhaps learn something new on a variety of topics from our featured speakers.

And just one more friendly reminder—I recently received an e-mail from the Office of Personnel Management advising me that my on-line services account had not been activated within the past 13 months and that I should log on to my account within the next 60 days or my account would be deactivated. I had forgotten that OPM security policy requires that you access your account every 15 months or it will be deactivated. I can't imagine what would be entailed in trying to reactivate an inactive account or the headaches that might ensure from such an effort, so I would recommend that you log onto your account periodically. Remember you can review the amount of your monthly annuity, change your federal and state withholding (particularly relevant if your tax filings show you have too much or not enough deducted for same), adjust direct deposits to a different banking institution, or change your address or other pertinent information—all on-line via www.serviceline.opm.gov.

Mary M. Brandt
President

From The Chapter President

As we welcome spring, we also welcome our new members to Chapter 356. I hope you will come and join us and get acquainted at our upcoming meeting. I also encourage our long-standing members to also join us on April 17 as we learn about a Civil War mystery and get a readout on the recent Virginia Federation Conference. And just a friendly reminder to our members to renew your membership in NARFE AND IN OUR CHAPTER when your mem-

Legislation Update and News of Note

FY 2024 Appropriations Bills

On March 6, the House approved a spending package by a 339-85 vote that contains \$460 billion in funding for the Departments of Agriculture, Energy, Housing and Urban Development, Transportation, Veterans Affairs, Interior, Commerce and Justice, as well as the Environmental Protection Agency. The measures will force many agencies, including the EPA, FBI and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives to absorb cuts relative to their current funding levels, though overall non-defense discretionary spending will remain flat. The legislation also did not include increased spending for federal employee salaries, despite President Joe Biden authorizing a 5.2% pay increase that went into effect on January 1, thus requiring agencies to absorb those personnel costs elsewhere within their budgets. The Senate passed the bill by a vote of 75 to 22 on March 8 and President Biden signed the legislation into law on March 9 thus avoiding a shutdown of the affected agencies.

On March 22 with a partial government shutdown looming the next day, the House approved a \$1.2 trillion spending package by a 286-134 vote. The Senate approved the legislation on March 23, by a 74-24 vote and the President signed the legislation into law the same day. The legislation funds the remaining parts of government that had not yet received full-year appropriations, including the Departments of Defense, Treasury, Homeland Security, Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and State. The measure increases defense spending, while some domestic agencies will see modest cuts in funding. The State Department and foreign operations budget was reduced by 6%, essentially setting it back to fiscal 2022 levels. The Small Business Administration's budget would decline by 2%, the Securities and Exchange Commission by 1% and grants to states from the Election Assistance Commission would drop by 27%. The measure provides \$3 billion more for Customs and Border Protection than Biden requested. That figure includes nearly \$500 million to increase Border Patrol staffing to 22,000 agents, a 10% increase from current levels. The Internal Revenue Service sustained its fiscal 2023 level funding and funding was increased for the Transportation Security Administration to cover its salary expenses.

Source: Government Executive, March 6 and 8, 2024; www.appropriations.senate.gov ; Government Executive, March 21 and 23, 2024

FY 2025 Federal Pay Proposal

President Joe Biden released his FY 2025 budget proposal on March 11, which included an average 2.0% pay raise for federal civilian employees. The figure marks a departure from the president's 2023 and 2024 budgets, which proposed some of the largest pay increases federal workers had seen in decades. The 2023 average pay raise of 4.6% was the highest since the George W. Bush administration, while this year's 5.2% average raise marked the largest since the Carter era. The White House did not specify how the raise would be split between across-the-board increases to basic pay and an average boost to locality pay; traditionally presidents have set aside 0.5% of the total figure for locality enhancements. The Office of Management and Budget stated that the 2025 raise figure reflects financial headwinds facing agencies, and the administration intended to supplement the raise with other reforms to federal personnel compensation. A competing congressional proposal would provide federal workers with a 7.4% pay increase next year, 4% of which is devoted to locality pay boosts. Biden's budget would also deviate from the traditional Democratic policy of pay parity by proposing a 4.5% pay increase for military service members.

Source: Government Executive, March 11, 2024

Schedule F

The Biden administration's FY 2025 budget proposal calls on Congress to change the law to prevent the return of an excepted service Schedule F in a potential future administration. Shortly after taking office, President Biden revoked an order issued in late 2020 by then-President Trump—which Trump has said he would revive if elected this November—that would have created that category for positions involved in making or carrying out policy or in providing confidential advice to political leadership. Competitive service employees moved into that category would have lost many of their civil service protections and the jobs could be filled without competition. The Biden administration's budget proposal supports codifying the protections provided by its Executive Order in a statute. The budget proposal also suggests language that would prevent the spending of any money to carry out a Schedule F-like program. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) anticipates finalizing new regulations in 2024 to reinforce and clarify longstanding civil service protections and merit systems principles. OPM's proposed regulations would protect employees from involuntary loss of their earned civil service protections for reasons unrelated to poor performance or conduct. Those rules would specify that only positions currently designated as politically ap-

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pointive can be considered of a confidential or policy making or advocating character. They further would specify that competitive service employees converted to the excepted service for any reason would retain their employment rights and that any denial of those rights would be appealable to the Merit System Protection Board.

Source: Fed Week, March 19, 2024 as noted in NARFE's NewsLine, March 19, 2024

Impacts of the Republic Study Commission Budget Plan on Federal Workers and Retirees

The Republic Study Committee, a group of more than 170 House Republicans led by Rep. Kevin Hern (R-OK), announced in late March their annual budget plan that purports to balance the budget within seven years, cut \$17.1 trillion in spending over the next decade and reduce taxes by \$4.2 trillion over that time period. Under their plan, the federal government would cease providing annual across-the-board pay increases to federal workers and retirees would have far less generous benefits. Study committee leaders said the budget plan is composed of 285 existing bills in Congress, collectively sponsored by 192 Republican lawmakers. The document argues that federal employees are overpaid compared to private sector workers by 17% when accounting for non-salary benefits. The Bureau of Labor Statistics data, on the other hand, indicates that federal workers make 27.54% less on average than their private sector counterparts before considering non-salary benefits.

The Study Commission budget plan would do away with the annual process by which the president proposes and

implements annual across-the-board raises to federal workers in favor of only providing "merit-based" increases, a move the conservatives say would save \$57 billion over the next decade. It calls for the government to reduce the paid leave available to federal employees "to match the value of benefits" provided in the private sector, thus reducing federal spending by \$75 billion over the next decade. Federal retirees' annuity benefits would be calculated using the highest five years of an employee's salary, rather than the current high three, the annual cost of living adjustments for federal retirees would be reduced or eliminated and the yield on the Thrift Savings Plan's G Fund would be reduced to track a shorter-term Treasury bill, which TSP officials have repeatedly said would make the G Fund functionally useless.

The lawmakers also called for an end of the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) for new federal employees, leaving them to rely only on the TSP and Social Security for retirement income, as well as ending the FERS supplement for federal workers who retire before age 62. The proposal would also eliminate federal retirees' access to the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program and transition to a "premium support system" where the government only pays a flat sum toward insurance premiums. The budget endorses legislation aimed at reducing the federal firing process to 30 days and stripping federal workers of some of their adverse action appeal rights. It would ban the use of official time at federal agencies, rescind President Biden's federal workforce executive orders and end federal workers' ability to pay their union dues via payroll deduction.

Source: Government Executive, March 25, 2024

Reflections On Public Service

"Our years of research about the people who work in the federal government finds that they care deeply about their work, aiding the public and pursuing the stability and integrity of government. Most of them are devoted civil servants. Across hundreds of interviews and surveys of people who have made their careers in government, what stands out most to us is their commitment to civic duty without regard to partisan politics. "

This was taken from an article written by Jaime Kucinkas, Associate Professor of Sociology, Hamilton College and James L. Perry, Professor of Public and Environmental Affairs Emeritus, Indiana University in The Conversation. Due to concerns over copyright infringement and licensing, we have not reprinted the entire article, but our members may find it of interest. It can be found in its entirety in the March 27, 2024 edition of the Government Executive, www.govexec.com, which reprinted the article under a Creative Commons license.

Alzheimer's Corner

Marilyn Markman, RN

Early in March I received an email from Leslie Kernisan, MD on a subject I think every older adult should be aware of - "Hospital Confusion."

A common complication in older adults is hospital confusion or delirium. Delirium affects up to 70% of aging adults during hospitalization and doesn't just happen to people with dementia or Alzheimer's - who are prone to this. Delirium is a state of worse than usual mental function brought on by illness or some kind of stress on the body or mind. Risk factors to be aware of include undergoing surgery, pre-existing dementia, and a history of delirium. Some short-term problems include falls and long hospital stays.

Delirium is often missed by hospital staff- they may not realize a person is more confused or is suffering from the "quiet" type as opposed to restlessness. Delirium is multi factorial - often not a single cause. It could have a combination of triggers - illness, pain, medication side effects, etc. This means treatment often requires a multi-pronged approach. It is estimated that 40% can be prevented. The ideal situation is that the hospital has a multidisciplinary delirium prevention approach or an Acute Care for Elders unit (ACE unit) where the person will be monitored closely.

How can we help a friend or loved one? Minimize sleep deprivation - request the night blood pressure check not be done, request a quiet room etc. DO NOT ask for sleeping pills. Even mild sedatives, like Benadryl, can increase the risk of developing delirium. Make sure hearing aids and/or eye glasses are available. Place familiar items nearby, such as family pictures. Avoid overwhelming or overstimulating the person. Encourage safe activities and mobilization. Alert hospital staff to any pain or discomfort. Some causes of hospital delirium are blood electrolyte imbalance, infections such as pneumonia and urinary tract infection, general anesthesia or surgery, dehydration, medication side effects, blood sugar too high or too low, sleep deprivation, and untreated pain.

For those with Alzheimer's or other forms of dementia, just the stress and unfamiliarity of the hospital setting can increase confusion. Hospital dementia can be treated by identifying and treating the triggers, providing supportive care, preventing injuries, and managing difficult behaviors. It can be scary to see an older person confused! Try not to panic, provide reassurances and support. Be vigilant and proactive with care. Even when everything is done right, including getting home to a restful familiar environment, it can take weeks or months for delirium to completely resolve- and in some cases a person never recovers back to their prior normal.

Hopefully this information will help if ever you encounter hospital delirium!

Some new numbers from the Alzheimer's Association: An estimated 6.9 million Americans have Alzheimer's, or 11% of the 65+ population.

Age breakdown:

- 65-74 years - 1.83 million or 5% of that population

- 75-84 years - 2.67 million or 13% of that population

- 85+ years - 2.42 million or 33% of that population

Virginia breakdown - 164,000 or 12% of its 65+ population.

So, this is why it is so important for us NARFE members to continue to donate to the NARFE program for research!

On April 11, 2024, the Alzheimer's Foundation of America will have a webinar from 1-2pm, "What They Wish They had Known Earlier." You can sign up for this on their website: <https://alzfdn.org/event/afa-care-connection-webinar-april/>.

You can help to support our chapter's Alzheimer's fund-raising goal with your donations. Checks should be written out to "NARFE Alzheimer's Research" and in memo write "NARFE Chapter 356". Send checks to:

NARFE Chapter 356

8818 Cather Ave.

Manassas, VA 20110-6104

Your checks will be forwarded to the Alzheimer's Association through NARFE. You will receive confirmation from us as well as the Alzheimer's Association.

NARFE WEBINARS

Upcoming NARFE Webinars:

Postal Service Health Benefits Program: What You Need to Know

Thursday, April 4 | 2 p.m. ET

Starting in 2025, Postal Service employees and retirees will receive health insurance coverage via the new Postal Service Health Benefits (PSHB) program. To help you understand your options, NARFE Federal Benefits Experts Tammy Flanagan and Mercedes Johnson will walk you through how Medicare will interact with PSHB—register today!

[REGISTER NOW](#)

Registration Coming Soon

- **Key Questions You Need To Answer As You Approach Retirement: Part 1, April 25**
- **Key Questions You Need To Answer As You Approach Retirement: Part 2, May 2**

Recent NARFE Webinars:

Tax Planning for Retired Feds

Thursday, March 21

Basic knowledge of the U.S. tax system and proactive tax planning can help retirees increase their after-tax income and improve their quality of life. Unfortunately, many needlessly give up hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars each year to unnecessary taxes. NARFE federal benefits expert Mark Keen, CFP, will walk you through how you can protect your assets through tax planning.

[Click here](#) to find links to dozens of valuable, expert-led presentations that you can watch on demand, anytime, anywhere. And remember, this is just one of many exclusive NARFE resources available to help you get the most out of your federal benefits, and one of the many reasons it pays to be a NARFE member.

Chapter Membership Report

4 dropped for nonrenewal

Chapter 356 membership as of March 30 is 123 members.

CHAPTER 356 OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES

| | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|--------------|
| President | Mary Brandt | 703-753-3954 |
| Vice President | Priscilla Saboe | 703-361-1150 |
| Secretary | Carol Campbell | 703-389-4702 |
| Treasurer | Richard Horte | 703-368-8767 |
| Membership Comm. | Helen Brooks | 703-791-6737 |
| National Legislation | Vacant | |
| Program Comm. | Vacant | |
| Service Officer | Priscilla Saboe | 703-361-1150 |
| Sunshine Comm. | Priscilla Saboe | 703-361-1150 |
| Alzheimer’s Comm. | Marilyn Markman, RN | 703-791-4329 |
| Chapter Chaplain | Vacant | |
| Newsletter Editor | Richard Horte | 703-368-8767 |

Chapter Email Address: narfe356@hotmail.com
Use this address to contact officers and committee chairs by email

Email Address Changes

Notify NARFE or our chapter whenever you change your email address to continue to receive this newsletter.

Manassas Chapter Newsletter Online

We distribute our newsletter to Chapter members using email addresses on file at NARFE. If you are not receiving NARFE email, please contact us or NARFE Headquarters at Member Services (703-838-7760). Our newsletters are also available at the Virginia Federation website at www.vanarfe.org/newsletters/. Scroll down to Current Chapter Newsletters, Area IX, Chapter 356.