



NARFE Chapter 1116 Newsletter

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

JUNE 2024

Next Chapter Meeting
Tuesday, June 11, 2024
Mulligan's Pub on the Green
12 noon
3700 Golf Trail Lane, Fairfax VA

Next Board Meeting
August 2024

2024 Board

Chapter Officers

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

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, it has been quite a start to June. Last week Mark and I spent a few days on our farm in Pennsylvania relaxing before our big Chapter 1116 celebration next week. It was so quiet and peaceful. We saw deer, turkeys, ground hogs and three bears (mother and two cubs). Luckily, we were in the car when we saw the bears. I also got stung on my eye lid by a yellow jacket bee which caused my left eye to swell up for several days. We enjoyed the smell of freshly mowed hay and delicious fresh strawberries. I made strawberry jam! This week I have been busy preparing the VFN Spring Newsletter and working with the planning committee finalizing plans for our celebration next week.

If I don't see you at our celebration next week, I hope you have a great summer, and we will see you in September.

Kathy

MEMBERSHIP REPORT – JAYNE SEIDMAN

As of May 31, 2024, the membership for Chapter 1116 was as follows: Total Chapter members - 158, Total National Members in Chapter Area - 139, Grand Total = 297. We welcome our new member, Scott Hagen.

SUNSHINE REPORT – HARRIET EPSTEIN

Congratulations to Judy and Jim Hathaway who will celebrate their 55th wedding anniversary on June 21. Congratulations to Kathy and Mark Arpa who will celebrate their 30th wedding anniversary on July 1. Happy birthday greetings are going out to Shirley Martin who will be 99 years young on July 2. Birthday greetings to Adrian Van Huizen who will celebrate his 103rd birthday on August 31.

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



COMING UP

June 11 – Celebration of our Chapter's **55th Anniversary** at Mulligan's Pub on the Green, 3700 Golf Trail Lane, Fairfax, VA. A social hour/cash bar will begin at 11:30 a.m. with a buffet lunch to follow at 12:00 noon. A short program is also planned. The event will end by 2:00 p.m. [This is our last monthly meeting until September.]

August 18-20 – NARFE
FedCon24 – St. Louis, MO.



September 10 – Chapter Meeting – VCC - 1 PM - Guest speaker – TBD

REPORT OF MAY 14 CHAPTER MEETING – NANCY BURKE-SANOW

Kathy Arpa, Chapter 1116 President, opened the meeting at 1:06 p.m. Kathy recognized the Chapter members who had May birthdays and the guest speaker Linda Colbert, the Mayor of the Town of Vienna. She reminded Chapter members of the upcoming Chapter anniversary party to be held at Mulligans Pub on the Green in Fairfax, VA. Kathy noted that the NARFE National President Bill Shackelford and his wife Donna will be at the Chapter anniversary event.



Jayne Seidman introduced the guest speaker Linda Colbert, (pictured here) who is the Mayor of Vienna, VA. Ms. Colbert is a University of Virginia alumna; has a master's degree from Virginia Tech and plays on the Vienna Woods tennis team. Mayor Colbert noted that the town received funding from a Trust that was used to build five miles of new sidewalks by the end of the year. The town also planted new trees if the existing trees had to come down and encouraged developers to retain existing trees. Mayor Colbert further noted the landscaping and new planter boxes along Maple Avenue and Church Street. The site of the former Faith Baptist Church and Town Annex property is under consideration to become a fitness center with indoor pool.

Mayor Colbert remarked that Vienna residents and the Town Council believe that there would be a significant adverse impact from the casino planned to be built in Tysons. A delegation travelled to Richmond to meet with Virginia State Senators and Delegates to express concerns about the proposed casino. Another concern of Vienna residents is the issue of crossing guards at public schools. There is a suggestion to train residents to be crossing guards. Vienna is also looking at ways to improve parking. Mayor Colbert noted that she has recently attended many ribbon cuttings for new Vienna businesses. NARFE members raised several issues including traffic congestion, the W&OD trail, and plans for the vacant lot at the corner of Maple Avenue and Nutley Street. Mayor Colbert noted that the trail will be expanded with a dual trail for walking and biking.

Dave Graf reported on the Chapter's 55th Anniversary party. So far, there are 25 attendees and there is plenty of space for additional attendees. The buffet will be available at noon. The deadline for reservations is June 1st.

Kathy Arpa noted the importance of voting in the VFN election that closes on May 31st. (Results should be going out soon from VFN President Boatman.) Dave Graf presented the Treasurer's Report. The Chapter's bank account balance is \$5,579.17. Jayne Seidman reported that the chapter has 159 members. Chris Geisler gave a synopsis of VA legislative bills of potential interest to NARFE members. Jim Hathaway noted federal legislation of interest to NARFE members, including the proposed Medicare and Medicaid Nursing Home guidelines and their impact on staffing shortages at nursing homes and the prospects of potential federal pension legislation.

Margaret Murphy conducted the 50/50 raffle for Alzheimer's Research. The meeting was adjourned at 3:01 p.m.

TREASURER'S REPORT - DAVE GRAF

Since the May Newsletter, the Chapter received \$79.96 for membership dues collected by NARFE's National Headquarters for April. Payments for 17 additional members and guests have been received for the Chapter's 55th Anniversary Celebration. \$300.00 was deposited and \$150.00 has recently been received and will be deposited.

There have been several expenses. The first expense was \$16.06 to reimburse Margaret Murphy for the Ice Cream Social expenses at our May 14th Chapter Meeting. The second expense was a \$310.00 partial payment to Mulligan's Pub on the Green for the buffet at the upcoming Chapter's 55th Anniversary Celebration.

Since both winners of the 50/50 drawing donated their winnings, \$70.00 was received for Alzheimer's Research at the May 14th Chapter Meeting. This donation will be sent to the VFN Coordinator for the NARFE Alzheimer's Research Fund. The total contribution for this year is \$660.00.

LEGISLATION REPORTS

National Legislation – Jim Hathaway

Social Security's 2025 COLA Forecast

Although we are still a few months away from the official announcement, recent inflation reports provide valuable insights. The April inflation report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) states that the "Core inflation", which excludes food and energy costs, rose by 3.4% over the last 12 months—well above the Federal Reserve's 2% target.

Social Security beneficiaries are waiting for the annual Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) announcement. Over the past three years, COLAs have exceeded the two-decade average, with adjustments of 5.9% (2022), 8.7% (2023), and 3.2% (2024). The hope is that this trend will continue for a fourth consecutive year. Based on the current statistics, there would be a 2.7% COLA. The average retired worker would see an increase of approximately \$52 per month. Workers with disabilities and survivor beneficiaries could expect monthly benefits to rise by \$42 and \$41, respectively.

Social Security's 2025 COLA presents a double-edged sword for retirees. While higher adjustments benefit beneficiaries, they also reflect persistent inflationary pressures. As we approach the official announcement in October, all eyes remain on the data and its implications for millions of Americans who rely on Social Security benefits. The problem for SS recipients is obvious, inflation is up 3.4%, but SS may only be up 2.7%, a difference of 0.7% that does not include food and energy costs.

Temporary Suspension of new federal employee enrollments in FSAFEDS Flexible Spending

Flexible Spending Accounts for Federal Employees (FSAFEDS) offers two different flexible spending accounts (FSAs): a health care flexible spending account, and a dependent care flexible spending account.

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has suspended new enrollments in FSAFEDS. This decision was made due to a surge in fraudulent activity affecting hundreds of federal employee accounts. The pause also applies to current FSAFEDS enrollees who experience qualifying life events (QLEs), such as marriage or childbirth.

- During the pause, existing FSAFEDS enrollees can still submit reimbursement claims. Once OPM resumes enrollment functionality, any necessary adjustments based on QLEs will be made retroactively.
- The suspension is the result of fraudulent activity involving scammers using personal information from federal employees to create new fraudulent FSAs or make false reimbursement claims on existing accounts. HealthEquity, the vendor administering FSAFEDS, notified OPM about the rise in fraudulent activity. OPM is working with HealthEquity to secure affected accounts, compensate impacted individuals, and enhance anti-fraud controls.

- Although the fraud is limited in scope, the scammers managed to accumulate a couple of hundred thousand dollars. HealthEquity has implemented additional security measures, including Login.gov requirements and dual-factor authentication for federal employees accessing their FSAFEDS accounts.

The investigation into the source of the fraud is ongoing, and there is no evidence that OPM's or HealthEquity's online systems were compromised. Affected individuals' accounts have been secured, and OPM is in the process of reimbursing impacted enrollees in full.

Federal Employees' Perspective on Age-Friendly Workplaces

According to the TransAmerica Center for Retirement Studies, federal employees hold different views on workplace age-friendliness compared to their employers. Here are the key insights:

Federal Employee View:

- Approximately 69% of federal workers consider their employers to be age friendly.
- Around 76% of federal employees feel that their employers are helpful in achieving work-life balance.

Employer Perspective (Federal Government):

- About 87% of federal employers believe their agencies are age friendly. They offer opportunities, flexible work arrangements, and training to support employees of all ages in their current roles.
- Among federal employers, 94% believe they are helpful in supporting their employees. Of these, 51% consider themselves very helpful.

Additional Insights:

- Most federal agencies (60%) do not offer formal phased retirement programs.
- Only 30% of federal employers pay special attention to hiring applicants aged 50 and older.
- Approximately one-third of federal employers believe people become "too old" to work at a certain age, with a median cited age of 62.

These findings underscore the importance of fostering age-friendly environments within federal workplaces, considering the unique needs and perspectives of federal employees.

Virginia State Legislation – Chris Gieseler

JUNE 18th PRIMARY VOTING

Early voting in Virginia continues for the June Democratic and Republic primaries for various U.S. House districts as well as for the U.S. Senate (re incumbent Tim Kaine). For areas having primaries, the primaries will occur June 18, 2024. The political parties in certain congressional districts have already chosen their own candidates for the November 5, 2024, General Election. Thus, those districts will not hold primaries this year.

Please see the Fairfax County Office of Elections website (www.fairfaxcounty.gov/elections/home-page) for information about which districts are holding primaries, voter registration and details about mail-in voting, and locations for early in-person voting. Early voting ends on June 15, 2024.

STATE LEGISLATION

Virginia's new two-year budget cycle will commence July 1, 2024, which includes a compromise that was enacted on May 13, 2024, during a Special Session of the Virginia General Assembly (HB 6001). The total budget for the upcoming fiscal year is \$89.5 billion. Governor Youngkin signed the budget bill the same day, along with another bill (HB 6002) amending the current state budget (\$84.2 billion, as amended), which ends on June 30, 2024.

Looking ahead to the next legislative cycle, members of the General Assembly can “prefile” bills starting on July 15, 2024, for the Regular Session that begins in January 2025. The Virginia Federation of NARFE typically develops a Legislative Plan that addresses perceived needs of federal retirees and active employees in Virginia prior to the start of a Regular Session. I will monitor developments regarding the Plan and report them as warranted.

Now, to wrap up the loose ends of the 2024 sessions of the General Assembly, the legislature reconvened on April 17, 2024. The General Assembly sustained all the Governor’s vetoes (201 for all the Regular Session) and accepted his recommendations on a number of bills (32 for all the Regular Session). Regarding bills for which the General Assembly rejected the Governor’s recommendations, the legislators returned 55 bills for his action (approval, veto or allowing a bill to become law without signature). He approved seven of those 55 bills and vetoed the remaining 48 bills. Among the seven bills approved are:

- HB 1071 allows local jurisdictions to lower speed limits on roads in business and residential areas within their jurisdiction, including state-owned roads, from 25 mph to not less than 15 mph (or to raise the speed back up). The limits must be posted.
- SB 498 requires school systems to notify parents of children in schools within an affected school system when a drug overdose occurs in that school system. The notice must be made within 24 hours and must provide information on various topics.
- HB 707 and SB 361, re: Consumer Data Protection Act, are aimed at safeguarding children under the age of 13 from the use of their data for targeted advertising or sale, or use of the children’s location data, without parental permission.

Among the bills that the Governor vetoed were ones dealing with contraception (HB 609 and SB 237), skills games (SB 212), and limits on tax benefits for Daughters of the Confederacy and similar organizations (HB 568 and SB 517).

The number of bills vetoed by the Governor in 2024 is the highest by any Virginia governor in a single year. This may have occurred because the Democrats have a majority in both chambers of the General Assembly. Thus, many bills addressing Democrat priorities were passed that did not align with the Governor’s vision for legislation affecting the Commonwealth.

SERVICE OFFICER REPORT

Tornadoes impact locations across the country every year, bringing massive winds and destruction in their paths. Although tornadoes are most common in the Central Plains, the Midwest, and the Southeast, they have been reported in all 50 states. On June 5, there were reports of tornados in our local area including Leesburg, VA and Gaithersburg, MD.



Keep yourself and your loved ones safe by preparing in advance for tornadoes. Know the signs of a tornado. Some tornadoes strike quickly without time for a tornado warning, so it is important to know the signs of a tornado.

Signs that a tornado may be approaching include the following:

- Rotating funnel-shaped cloud
- Approaching cloud of debris
- Dark or green-colored sky
- Large, dark, low-lying cloud
- Large hail
- Loud roar that sounds like a freight train

If you notice any of these signs take cover immediately and stay tuned to local radio and TV stations, a NOAA weather radio, or the internet.