



**NATIONAL ACTIVE AND RETIRED FEDERAL EMPLOYEES**

**CHAPTER 2065 NEWSLETTER**

**POST OFFICE BOX 1811**

**LOUISA, VIRGINIA 23093-1811**

*Contact: NARFE2065news@vanarfe.org*

**VOLUME XXXLIII, NUMBER 4 – SEPTEMBER 2024**

**ELECTED OFFICERS**

<b>PRESIDENT</b>	<b>Karen Cheatwood</b>	<b>703-606-6513</b>	<b>karenlaurasara@gmail.com</b>
<b>1<sup>ST</sup> V.P. /PROGRAM</b>	<b>Dick Shrum</b>	<b>540-872-5409</b>	<b>dickshrum@hughes.net</b>
<b>2<sup>ND</sup> V.P.</b>	<b>Lee Miller</b>	<b>540-907-2440</b>	<b>leeandjulie7@gmail.com</b>
<b>SECRETARY(2)</b>	<b>Bob Maher</b>	<b>434-589-1170</b>	<b>paws618@embarqmail.com</b>
	<b>Julie Miller</b>	<b>540-907-2435</b>	<b>juliemiller@centurylink.net</b>
<b>TREASURER</b>	<b>Charles Alvarez</b>	<b>540-894-4804</b>	<b>alv10214@aol.com</b>

**CALENDAR**

<b>SEPTEMBER</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>Chapter Meeting - 11:30 a.m., Roma's Restaurant, program: Healthcare and Benefits</b>
<b>NOVEMBER</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>Chapter Meeting - 11:30 a.m., Roma's Restaurant, program: Annual business meeting</b>
<b>DECEMBER</b>		<b>Annual Christmas Luncheon – TBD, see Newsletter comments</b>

**NOTE: If Louisa County schools are closed because of weather, Louisa County Chapter 2065's meeting is cancelled.**

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I've thought about this letter and what we need to accomplish regarding our chapter and the future but haven't come up with a lot of ideas so hope that some of you are willing to help or at least provide suggestions.

Our September meeting will be very important and interesting in that Dick Shrum, Program Chair has invited a representative from GEHA, one of the premier federal health plans. The request is not only to talk about GEHA plans but to also discuss changes to Medicare and those directed by OPM that may affect each of us. For example, the fact that health plans were authorized to sign up members who had Medicare B to add Medicare D and anyone who didn't want D had to opt out after the fact. What are the pros and cons of this? Are there any future actions coming down the pike.

Looking ahead to the November meeting which is our annual meeting. This is the year that we elect officers as our charter calls for elections every other year. I don't know whether the current officers want to continue for another term but it always helps to have new ideas and recommendations. I for one wouldn't mind being an Immediate Past President. Besides officers, we need folks to take on one of the activities that make our chapter viable; for instance, without programs, the meetings may lack focus and interest. (It would make sense to take on this position when Dick could help or mentor, if desired.) Another discussion at the annual meeting would be meeting schedules. For the past 2 years, we've changed the schedule with the hopes of getting more interest in attendance. We have had a couple meetings that garnered a couple more attendees than the executive board but that hasn't added enough to have an audience that makes it worth a speakers time in most cases.

I hope that everyone received the NARFE email notice that voting is open for NARFE National Officers. I suggest that you read the candidates statements and vote as you think best because the folks that are elected need to jump in and work to increase membership as the more members NARFE has the more impact it will have toward protecting our benefits, i.e. don't take things for granted. If you want help with voting, please let me know.

2024 MEETING DATES and times:

September 19, 2024, at 11:30am Romas;

November 21, 2024, at Romas;

December TBD

(Please note the meeting location may change depending on our program.)

Also, we've come up with a few ideas for a Christmas program, they include:

- Luncheon at Romas as we've had in the past. Close to home, good food and fun with friends
- Trying for a luncheon at Alpine Chef in Fredericksburg. Last year we went to the Bavarian Chef in Madison, Va. Had a great time and lots of good food, and
- Trying to get tickets to a matinee at the Christmas Spectacular at the Riverside Dinner Theater in Fredericksburg

The chapter usually helps with the cost of the Christmas luncheon for members so will look into that once we come up with a plan. Please note that we can also investigate some kind of ride sharing if that is interesting. **Please let any of the officers know if you'd be interested in one of the options as we need to book this soon.**

It continues to be a privilege to serve as your President, but I would welcome any help and/or suggestions. I would also hope to see you at a meeting,

KAREN CHEATWOOD, PRESIDENT

## SECRETARY'S REPORT

The June meeting was held at Roma's Restaurant with six members in attendance.

Our chapter currently has 43 members. Karen lead a discussion regarding an inquiry she received from NARFE corporate asking if we were willing to canvass our members for input on how corporate can improve. Several members discussed their experiences when we tried this approach several years ago; specifically, only one member responded. Karen decided to table this activity for now.

Our September meeting will focus on changes and updates to the medical plans available to retirees. Looking forward to November, Dick is considering a return to the Louisa Historical Society. December meeting will be our Christmas celebration. Karen will research some possible venues and provide her ideas to the group for consensus.

Charlie provided the Treasurer's report.

Our program this month was an update on the St Francis of Assisi Health Clinics in Uganda. Jamie Hicks shared a video on Uganda and highlighted the main causes of death being malaria, aids and TB with the lack of clean water as a huge problem. There are three health centers that Knights of Columbus have built and each year volunteers from Catholic Health Initiatives (including Jamie and our own, Bob Maher) travel to Uganda to work at a center. This past year 1,632 patients have been served at these centers. Our thanks to Jamie for taking time away from her nursing job at UVA and Bob for sharing their passion for helping the people of Uganda.

Last meeting's minutes were approved with a motion by Bob Maher, seconded by Charlie Alvarez. A motion to

adjourn was made by Charlie Alvarez and seconded by Lee Miller.

**JULIE MILLER, CO-SECRETARY**

## **PROGRAM**

In the last newsletter, I opened with some words about Global Warming and a reference to the many weather-related conditions that were adversely affecting our fellow countrymen. However, there was no way I could have imagined the extreme number of conditions that we have heard about on the news over the past couple months. Flooding, extremely high heat indexes, ice and snow, mammoth fires, etc. I sincerely hope that none of our chapter members were hiking in Yellowstone Park during the past week ...

Our June program was an excellent “Part II” of a story we first heard about at the February 2023 meeting. The topic began 10 years ago when our Chapter 2065 member Bob Maher and his fellow members of Sts Peter and Paul Knights of Columbus Council in Palmyra created the St Francis of Assisi Health Clinic in Uganda. The presentation was given by Jamie Hicks of Palmyra, who serves as a Nurse Practitioner in the NICU unit at UVA Hospital. She was in Uganda for two weeks in January this year teaching their doctors and nurses how to treat and save newborns who are born in distress. Members of our local St. Jude Council were invited to attend.

The program for the upcoming September meeting will be an important follow-up to one we had in September 2021, with particular focus on our evolving health and medical benefits. As we all know, NARFE is our major supporter and advocate, urging minimal increases in our plan costs and pressing Congress to find ways to reduce prescription costs and improve healthcare. There is a wealth of information on the NARFE website and discussions of the various issues they are following. The focus will be health care and the evolving national initiatives and objectives. We plan to have two speakers who will provide information and answer any and all questions you may have. The first will be a benefits/health programs expert from NARFE HQ in Arlington, Virginia. My hope is that the person will be able to attend in person (I promised a free lunch), but if not, we’ll have a live Zoom session with him/her. We will also have a variety of NARFE handouts on all the benefits and such for attendees. Regarding the second speaker, you may recall that we had Mr. Juan Valdez, the Account Manager for GEHA in Virginia, join us and provide great information. We’re still working on whether he or another GEHA expert will join us, but in any event, they can provide great info on plans, options, and such.

Regarding future programs this Fall, I am sure that they will be discussed in the upcoming executive committee meeting. In the meantime, I will be working actively to bring down our outside temperatures a little so we can go out on the porch or under the gazebo to enjoy a glass of wine. We are always appreciative of any ideas or suggestions you may have, and in the meantime, stay safe!

**DICK SHRUM, PROGRAM CHAIR**

## **NATIONAL LEGISLATION REPORT**

### **FY2025 starts October 1, 2024:**

The House has passed the following 5 of 12 appropriation bills:

Defense - H.R. 8774/S. 4921

Energy-Water - H.R. 8997/S. 4927

Homeland Security - H.R. 8752

Interior-Environment - H.R. 8998/S. 4802

State-Foreign Operations - H.R. 8771/S. 4797

The Senate hasn’t passed any appropriations for FY2025 yet.

### **The following are updates on items that we have been keeping track of:**

*Social Security Fairness Act of 2023* H.R. 82 and S. 597 – Co-sponsors have increased to 325 in the House (210 Democrats, 115 Republicans) and 62 in the Senate (46 democrats, 13 republicans and 3 independents).

- This bill eliminates the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) which reduces Social Security benefits for individuals who also receive a pension or disability benefit from an employer that did not withhold Social Security taxes and the Government Pension Offset (GPO) which reduces Social Security benefits for spouses, widows, and widowers who also receive government pensions of their own.
- This is the most support that a Social Security Fairness Act has gotten in any congress.
- There is a push to get enough signatures for a discharge petition to bring the bill to the floor for a vote. There isn’t much time before the end of this current congressional session for this to happen.

The other bills related to Social Security are *H.R.4583/S.2280-Social Security 2100 Act* which has 184 democratic co-sponsors in the House and 4 in the Senate.

- This modifies the Social Security system with respect to benefit calculations, fund administration, and beneficiary resources.

- The bill temporarily increases the primary insurance amount for Social Security benefits for all individuals. It also modifies benefit calculations for certain individuals, including temporarily (1) increasing benefits for widows or widowers in two-income households; and (2) allowing children of a deceased, disabled, or retired worker to remain eligible for benefits through age 25 if they are full-time students (Currently child benefits end at age 18 or when the recipient finishes high school).
- The bill temporarily eliminates the GPO and WEP.
- The bill also modifies the financing and administration of the Social Security trust funds by (1) subjecting income over \$400,000 to Social Security payroll taxes, and (2) combines the Federal Old-Age and Survivors Insurance Trust Fund and the Federal Disability Insurance Trust Fund into a single Social Security Trust Fund

There are a few months left in the 118<sup>th</sup> congress and some **bills being considered that are related to the federal workforce include:**

- A 2% pay raise for FY2025 seems likely
- The 2023 Chance to Compete Act, which has passed the House and is proceeding in the Senate would require agencies to implement many hiring practices that have already been [shown to work well](#).
- A number of bills have been introduced that would target federal workforce pay and benefits in multiple ways (Note that some of these actions have been proposed before but haven't made it into law but they keep coming back for consideration.):
  - One bill, the Federal Employee Return to Work Act, would completely cut locality pay for federal employees who telework at least one day per week.
  - Federal Employee Locality Accountability in Retirement Act, would exclude locality pay from retirement annuity calculations for new federal employees entering the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS)
  - Continued efforts to prohibit official time – The No Union Time on the Taxpayer's Dime Act would prohibit federal

employees from using on-the-clock hours for union-related activities.

- The Supporting Employees in the Guard and Reserve Act, would bump up reserve members in the federal workforce from 15 days to 20 days of paid military leave annually that aims to help reserve service members attend military trainings without losing pay.

Consider going to the advocacy page of the NARFE.org website where there are prepared letters on some of the topics discussed above or that are important to federal employees/retirees. You can write your own letter/e-mail and they will ensure that it is sent to your representative and senators plus notify you that the e-mail was sent. NARFE also gives you the ability to send comments to your representative and senator using Twitter (“X”) if that is your preference. These topics include Saving the Civil Service Act, Long Term Care Premiums, Equal COLA, etc.

<https://www.narfe.org/advocacy/legislative-action-center/>

**Karen Cheatwood** ACTING LEGISLATIVE OFFICER

### **LEGISLATIVE CONTACTS**

**Mark R. Warner;** United States Senate,  
Washington, DC 20510  
202-224-2023

fax 202-224-6295

Email-Go to:

<http://warner.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?p=contact> and fill out the screen information requested.

**Tim Kaine;** United States Senate,  
Washington, DC 20510  
202-224-4024

fax 202-224-6363

Email-Go to: <http://kaine.senate.gov/contact/> and fill out the screen information requested.

**Abigail Spanberger;** U.S. House of Representatives,  
Washington, DC 20515  
202-225-2815

fax 202-225-0011

Email: <http://spanberger.house.gov> and search the site

**Bob Good;** U.S. House of Representatives,  
Washington, DC 20515  
(202) 225-4711

Fax: (202) 225-5681

Email: <https://good.house.gov/> and search the site

**Bryce E. Reeves;** State Senator, 28th District  
PO Box 7021, Fredericksburg , VA 22407  
540-645-8440

E-mail [district17@senate.virginia.gov](mailto:district17@senate.virginia.gov)

**John J. McGuire III;** State Senate-10<sup>th</sup> District  
PO Box 87, Richmond, VA 23218  
804 698-7510

E-mail [SenatorMcGuire@senate.virginia.gov](mailto:SenatorMcGuire@senate.virginia.gov)

**Robert D. Orrock, Sr.;** State Delegate-66<sup>th</sup> District  
P.O. Box 458, Thornburg, VA 22565  
540-891-1322

E-mail [DelBORrock@house.virginia.gov](mailto:DelBORrock@house.virginia.gov)

**Phillip A. Scott;** State Delegate-63<sup>rd</sup> District  
2215 Plank Rd. #287, Fredericksburg, VA 22401  
540-360-3789

E-Mail [DelPScott@house.virginia.gov](mailto:DelPScott@house.virginia.gov)

**Nicholas L. Freitas;** State Delegate-62<sup>nd</sup> District  
P.O. Box 693, Culpepper, VA 22701  
540-222-7706

E-Mail [DelegateNFreitas@house.virginia.gov](mailto:DelegateNFreitas@house.virginia.gov)

### **COMMITTEE CHAIRS & APPOINTED POSITIONS**

Service Officer -- *Vacant*

Chaplain-- *Vacant*

Newsletter Editor – Lee Miller 540-907-2440

Alzheimer's Fund – *Vacant*

National Legislation – Ray Siewert, *Actg.* 540-967-1544

State Legislation – *Vacant*

Membership – *Vacant*

Sunshine – *Vacant*

Public Relations – Dick Shrum 540-872-5409

Program – Dick Shrum (Soon to be vacant) 540-872-5409

Holiday lunch – *Vacant*

Commission on Aging – *Vacant*