



NARFE Chapter 1116 Newsletter

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

DECEMBER 2024 – JANUARY 2025

Next Chapter Meeting – 12 NOON
Tuesday, December 10, 2024
Mulligan's Pub on the Green
13700 Golf Trail Lane, Fairfax, VA

Next Board Meeting
Thursday, January 23, 2025
Vienna Community Center
1 PM

2024 Board

Chapter Officers

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

1st Vice President &
Programs Ralph Dantinne
703-938-9757

2nd Vice President,
Membership & Hostess
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

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

Sunshine
Harriet Epstein
703-560-4137

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE – KATHY ARPA

It is here! The Holiday Season is in full swing. One day the leaves are flying. The next day the houses are decorated for the holidays and the weather has dramatically changed. We will have our Holiday Party on **December 10** at Mulligan's Pub on the Green in Fairfax. We hope that each new member who joined our Chapter this year will make a special effort to attend the event as it will provide an excellent opportunity to meet each of you.

At our November 12th meeting we recognized our Veterans in attendance and heard the latest information from Michele Nesbitt-Johnson on how the BlueCross/BlueShield health plans will change in 2025. We also elected Chapter officers for 2025. They will be installed at our Holiday Party. I want to thank Nancy Burke-Sanow for serving as our secretary for the past year and all of our Board Members who work hard to keep our chapter active. Please note that we do not plan to produce a newsletter for January. I will, however, send out a reminder email in early January for the Chapter Meeting on January 14, 2025.

Mark and I spent a few weeks in Florida. We had damage to our house in Clearwater from Hurricane Milton and spent a lot of time arranging for replacement of our roof. We did have time to enjoy a few nights of dancing at the American Legion Post 7 in Clearwater and karaoke at the VFW Post 10093 in Safety Harbor. It was 80 degrees down there on Thanksgiving. We came home to frigid weather! Special thanks to Dave Graf for producing this newsletter!

It is not too late to sign up for our annual Holiday Party on **December 10**. Bring a friend. (*See details on page 2*) I hope you can join us.

Happy Holidays!
Kathy

REMINDER: If Fairfax County schools are closed because of inclement weather, Chapter 1116 (Vienna-Oakton) Meetings are cancelled. If in doubt, contact Chapter President Kathy Arpa at 703-205-9041.

COMING UP

Tuesday, December 10 – Chapter Annual Holiday Party – 12 noon – Mulligan’s Pub on the Green located at 13700 Golf Trail Lane, Fairfax, VA 22033. (GPS works good for directions.)

Tuesday, January 14, 2025 – Chapter Meeting – 1 PM - Vienna Community Center – slide show by Mark Arpa (tentative)

Tuesday, February 11, 2025 – Chapter Meeting – 1 PM - VCC - Guest Speaker – Gaston Gianni, Virginia Federation of NARFE (VFN) National Legislation Chair – updates on National Legislation priorities as a result of the new administration and Congress

Tuesday, March 11, 2025 – Chapter Meeting – 1 PM - VCC - Shawn L. Smith, State Director, Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) from Richmond, VA

SAVE THE DATE - April 6-9, 2025 -- 2025 VFN Conference in Harrisonburg, VA

CHAPTER HOLIDAY PARTY -- DECEMBER 10 – 12 NOON

The annual Holiday Party will be held on Tuesday, December 10th beginning at 12 NOON at Mulligan’s Pub on the Green (same location as our 55th anniversary celebration). Unlike our party in June, we will **not** have a buffet lunch. Everyone will order from the menu. The full menu will be available. Servings are plentiful. Each attendee will pay for their own meal. The Chapter Board members will provide *desserts*. You can sign up by calling Dave Graf at 703-938-2962 no later than Sunday, **December 8**. All NARFE members and guests are welcome. The Chapter’s newly elected officers for 2025 will be installed at the event by Area 10 Vice President Ted Pasek.



At the party, we will collect donations of cash or checks for the Toys for Tots Foundation. Please make your check payable to *Toys for Tots*. We will have the popular 50/50 drawing for NARFE’s Alzheimer’s Research Fund. Donations will also be collected for it.

If you would like to participate in a voluntary gift exchange, please bring a wrapped gift with a value of \$20 or more.

REPORT OF NOVEMBER 12TH CHAPTER MEETING – DAVE GRAF

President Kathy Arpa called the Chapter Meeting to order at 1:00 PM on November 12, 2024 at the Vienna Community Center (VCC). Kathy welcomed a new member and recognized several guests from neighboring NARFE chapters. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by our veterans (Curtis Turnbow, Ralph Dantine and Dave Graf).

The election of chapter officers for 2025 was held. Nominating Committee Chair Bill Inch conducted the election. The Nominating Committee (Bill Inch and Mark Arpa) had presented a slate of nominees at the October Membership meeting for each of the five positions. There were no nominations from the floor. Kay Dellinger made a motion that was seconded by Dolores Inch to accept the nominees by acclamation. The motion passed unanimously. The following members were elected for the Chapter’s Officer positions for 2025:

President	Kathy Arpa
1st Vice President	Ralph Dantine
2nd Vice President	Jayne Seidman
Secretary	David Graf
Treasurer	Chris Gieseler

The newly elected officers will be installed at the Holiday Party on December 10th and will take office on January 1, 2025.

Kathy announced that next year's Virginia Federation of NARFE (VFN) Conference will again be held at Hotel Madison in Harrisonburg, VA. The Conference dates are April 6-9, 2025. A sign-up for supporters for the Conference was circulated.

Secretary Nancy Burke-Sanow read the minutes of the October Membership meeting and Treasurer Dave Graf gave the Treasurer's Report. He noted that dues collected by NARFE's National Headquarters for September had not been received due to the delays implementing the software revisions to NARFE's systems. Membership Chair Jayne Seidman reported that the Chapter has 165 members.



Programs Chair Ralph Dantine introduced the guest speaker, Michele Nesbitt-Johnson (pictured above) from CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield (BCBS). Since no Postal employees or Postal retirees were present, Michele only discussed the regular BCBS plans in the non-Postal Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHBP). There are similar, separate BCBS plans offered in the new Postal Health Benefits Program (PHBP).

The first topic discussed was BCBS's Medicare Prescription Drug Program (MPDP) that was first introduced for plan year 2024 as an alternative to the regular BCBS Pharmacy Benefit. The intent of the MPDP was to provide better prescription coverage and reduced costs. She explained that the MPDP is not the same as Medicare Part D.

For 2025, there will continue to be three BCBS plans – Blue FOCUS (no age limits, low premiums and low benefits), BASIC Option (only covers in-network providers, out-of-pocket cost is very predictable, and there is an \$800 Medicare premium reimbursement), and STANDARD Option (covers out-of-network providers, higher premiums, and Mail Order Pharmacy program). Michele stated that 96-98% of all doctors are in the BCBS Network. Specialty doctors may not be in any network. For travel overseas, all doctors are covered by Basic and Standard. (Medicare only covers medical services received in the US and US Territories.)

Michele then discussed the main benefit changes for 2025. Clarifications have been made to telehealth services (remote appointments with a network of doctors) and telemedicine (remote appointments to all other doctors and specialists). The copay amount for inpatient hospitals and many services will increase for 2025. She provided the new premium amounts (employee/retiree share) that will increase by 11% to 12%.

The meeting recessed for refreshments. Following the break, Kathy called the Business Meeting back to order. Chris Gieseler gave the State Legislation and National Legislation reports. Harriet Epstein reported on the Sunshine Committee activities. Programs Chair Ralph Dantine announced the upcoming Chapter meetings and other local events. Dave Graf gave an update of the Chapter's upcoming Holiday Party (*see Page 2 for details*). A sign-up sheet was circulated.

In new business, Kathy announced that the NARFE Region X Conference will be held the week of October 20, 2025, in Pigeon Forge, TN. She urged members to consider attending it.

Margaret Murphy conducted drawings for the 50/50 raffle to benefit the Alzheimer's Research Fund. She also conducted drawings for several blankets that our guest speaker had donated from BCBS. The meeting adjourned at 2:58 PM.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT – JAYNE SEIDMAN

As of December 1, 2024, the membership for Chapter 1116 was as follows: 167 Chapter members, 140 National Members in Chapter Area, Grand Total = 307. We welcome Laura Williams, Kathryn Wiseman and Susan Lyons to our Chapter.

The NARFE Fall Membership Drive ends December 31, 2024. A gift membership would be great for a neighbor or family member, and you would earn \$10 for each new member. Be sure to include your member number (found on your NARFE magazine mailing label) on the application form. An application form is in each issue of the NARFE magazine.

TREASURER'S REPORT - DAVE GRAF

Since the November Newsletter, there has not been any dues income and there have not been any expenses. Dues collected by NARFE's National Headquarters for September and October have not been sent to us due to delays in implementing the software revisions to NARFE's systems.

\$28.00 was received for Alzheimer's Research at the November 12th Chapter meeting. A Chapter member donated \$200.00 to Alzheimer's Research. These donations will be sent to the VFN Coordinator for the NARFE Alzheimer's Research Fund. The total contribution for this year is \$1,212.00.

Members who wish to make charitable, tax-deductible donations toward the treatment, prevention and, ultimately, a cure for this disease and enable our Chapter to also get credit, should make their check payable to **NARFE-Alzheimer's Research Fund** and include Chapter 1116 on the memo line. You can bring your check to the December 10th Holiday Party, or mail your check to me at:

Treasurer, NARFE Chapter 1116
1708 Palm Springs Dr.
Vienna, VA 22182-2330

SUNSHINE REPORT – HARRIET EPSTEIN

We are sending our best wishes for a complete recovery to Congressman Gerry Connolly who was recently diagnosed with esophagus cancer a few days ago. If you know of someone who needs a little sunshine or has celebrated an important event, please call me on 703-560-4137.

LEGISLATION REPORTS

NATIONAL LEGISLATION REPORT– JIM HATHAWAY

Status Update on the Social Security Fairness Act, H.R. 82

On November 12th, the House of Representatives passed the Social Security Fairness Act, H.R. 82. This Act would repeal the windfall elimination provision (WEP) and the government pension offset (GPO) requirements under current law. The bill had overwhelming bipartisan support, passing with a vote of 327-75.

More than 60 senators have already cosponsored the Senate companion bill, S. 597. This represents a strong bipartisan, filibuster-proof majority, showing a widespread agreement on the need to repeal WEP and GPO. NARFE is now pushing for the Senate to consider the identical, House-passed version and get it to the President's desk for his signature before the end of the year.

The WEP and GPO have caused considerable financial hardship for millions of retired public servants—including teachers, police officers, firefighters, and federal employees—by reducing or eliminating the Social Security benefits they earned through years of service. Your support is crucial to keep the momentum going and to help eliminate these unfair provisions. Contact your senators today and urge them to call on Senate leadership to bring the Social Security Fairness Act to the floor for a vote before the year ends.

Congress Weighs Government Funding Scenarios for December

As the December 20 deadline to extend government funding approaches, Congress is debating whether to pass full-year appropriation bills or another continuing resolution (CR) to avoid a shutdown. Another CR could extend funding levels into March 2025. Speaker of the House Mike Johnson (R-LA) supports another CR. Others, like Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), oppose it, advocating full-year appropriations.

Republicans, anticipating control of the House, Senate, and White House in January, see a CR as advantageous for negotiations. President-elect Trump's stance remains unknown, which could influence the outcome.

Review of the Proposed Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE)

President-elect Trump's government efficiency commission, led by Vivek Ramaswamy and Elon Musk, intends to propose large-scale layoffs of federal employees and ending telework.

- The commission is frequently referred to as the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), even though it is only an advisory group. The DOGE commission is expected to issue its major report by July 4, 2026. This report will outline recommendations for streamlining government operations and reducing wasteful spending. The administration aims to implement changes through executive action, bypassing Congress. They claim the administration will handle layoffs with compassion, despite the potential large-scale reductions.
- The commission expects to propose significant reductions in the federal workforce, with some agencies being eliminated entirely. Recent Supreme Court decisions provide legal backing for these actions. The decisions in *West Virginia v. Environmental Protection Agency* in 2022 and in *Loper Bright Enterprises v. Raimondo* earlier this year, both of which limited federal agencies' regulatory authority.
- The commission also plans to reduce teleworking and relocate parts of agencies to encourage voluntary resignations. Mr. Ramaswamy's assertion that most federal workers do not show up to work is disputed by data from the Office of Management and Budget.
- These plans face potential legal and logistical challenges, including existing union contracts and federal laws. Existing collective bargaining agreements and federal laws may hinder the commission's plans.
- President-elect Trump has also stated he intends to bring back the Schedule F initiative, which would end the merit-based Civil Service for many federal employees who are in policy roles.

It has been suggested that certain roles within federal agencies related to science, technology, and energy might be cut. Specifically mentioned are positions in bureaucratic functions at NASA, the Department of Energy (DOE), and the Renewable Energy Administration. It is believed the government should focus on core roles and eliminate what is seen as redundant positions.

VIRGINIA STATE LEGISLATION REPORT – CHRIS GIESELER

2025 State Legislative Plan

There has been no word from the Virginia Federation of NARFE's (VFN) State Legislation Chair regarding legislative developments that would result in bills for some or all of the four legislative priorities in the VFN State legislative plan for 2025.

2025 Virginia General Assembly

On January 6, 2025, there will be two special elections: one for the State Senate and one for the House of Delegates. The special elections were necessitated when State Senator Subramanyan (State Senate District 32, serving parts of Loudoun County) was elected in November 2024 for the U.S. House of Representatives seat for the 10th U.S. House District. (The 10th U.S. House District serves Loudoun County and part or all of Prince William and Culpepper Counties.) The second special election was necessitated because one of the candidates to fill the vacancy in State Senate District 32 (see above) is currently the Virginia Delegate for Virginia House District 26, serving part of Loudoun County.

The Virginia General Assembly will begin its 2025 Regular Session on January 8, 2025. All members of the House of Delegates, as well as the Governor, Lieutenant Governor and State Attorney General will be up for election in November 2025.

SERVICE OFFICER

Are your affairs in order? Have you organized your papers and listed numbers for your survivors to call at your death? NARFE has published an essential guide, "*Be Prepared for Life's Events, What Your Survivors Should Know*" This booklet is available on the NARFE website; search for Form 100.

Providing this type of help to our members is one of the things a Service Officer does. We need a Service Officer for our Chapter. What else does a Service Officer do? A Service Officer becomes the face and voice of NARFE, helps members apply for benefits, life insurance, etc., relays information as needed on Medicare and Medicaid, Social Security, and retirement benefits, and writes notes to families of those who have passed to offer information and support. If you are interested in helping your chapter as Service Officer, please contact Kathy Arpa.

