

January 2025



FEDERAL BENEFITS EXPERTS

Chapter email:
narfe356@hotmail.com

MANASSAS CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

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

No Chapter Luncheon Meeting in January. We are now meeting bi-monthly. Our next Luncheon Meeting will be held in February.

Next Meeting Date

February 19

Logan's Roadhouse
7731 Donegan Drive
Manassas, VA

Lunch
11:30 AM

Program
12:30 PM

Logan's is located in the Bull Run Shopping Center by the pond near Sudley Road.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

In case of inclement weather, we will follow the plans for Prince William County schools.

- ♦ If schools are closed, the meeting will be canceled.
- ♦ If schools are opening late, we will hold our meeting.

Future Meetings:

Chapter luncheon meetings are held on the third Wednesday of the month. We meet bimonthly on the even numbered months.

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

February 4--Executive Committee

February 19--Chapter Luncheon - Aging & Healthcare Issues

March 4--Executive Committee

From The Chapter President

I hope everyone had a great holiday season and we send best wishes to all of our members for a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year. Thank you to all of our members who attended our holiday luncheon and contributed so generously to SERVE and to the Alzheimer's Association. Through your efforts we were able to collect \$455 in gift cards for the SERVE food pantry and \$200 in raffle proceeds for Alzheimer's Research, which puts us well on our way to achieving our 2025 Alzheimer's Fund goal.

I wanted to take a minute to reflect on NARFE'S Mission Statement, which provides that one of its goals is "to support legislation and regulations beneficial to federal civilian employees and annuitants...and to oppose those detrimental to their interests." Well, **MISSION ACOMPLISHED!** On January 5 at a ceremony in the East Room of the White House, President Joe Biden signed into law the Social Security Fairness Act, which repealed the Government Pension Offset and Windfall Elimination Provision, two laws that have denied or reduced hard-earned Social Security benefits to federal annuitants and other public sector retirees for the past 40 years. NARFE'S advocacy efforts, in coordination with other public sector organizations, have achieved an historic and major legislative victory that will benefit 2.5 million retirees. As President Biden said

upon signing the legislation, "This is a big deal!" We are grateful to Senator Susan Collins, Senator Sherrod Brown and Congresswomen Abigail Spanberger for shepherding this legislation through the Congress. NARFE President Bill Shackelford, who was among the invitees witnessing the signing, stated that "NARFE is proud to have played a part in achieving this monumental victory, and we remain committed to ensuring that public service is met with the respect and fairness it deserves." You may not think that your participation in NARFE accomplishes very much, but here is a terrific example where your voice mattered and proof that NARFE did help make a difference. But we cannot just rest on our laurels; we must continue to be remain vigilant and persist in actively supporting NARFE. You can use the Legislative Action Center on the NARFE website to stay apprised of impending legislation that impacts our benefits and to contact your legislators.

We look forward to having you join us for our luncheon/meeting on February 19 at Logan's Roadhouse at 11:30.

Mary M. Brandt,
President

Legislation Update and News of Note

Pay Raise Set for Federal Workers

On December 23, President Joe Biden issued an executive order providing civilian federal workers with an average 2% pay raise beginning in January 2025. As first proposed in his fiscal 2025 budget plan last March, the increase amounts to a 1.7% across-the-board increase in basic pay, coupled with a 0.3% average boost to locality pay. Members of the armed services will see more than double the pay raise—4.5% on average—in 2025, abandoning pay parity across the federal workforce.

Source: Government Executive, December 23, 2024

Government Funded through March 14, 2025

On December 20, the House approved a stop gap spending bill to fund the government through March 14. The Senate approved the legislation in the early hours of December 21 thus avoiding a government shutdown, as the current continuing resolution was set to expire at midnight December 20. The measure includes more than \$100 billion in disaster aid to victims of hurricanes Helene and Milton, as well as other events, and economic assistance to farmers.

Source: Government Executive, December 20 and 21, 2024

WEP and GPO Repeal Passes Congress

On November 12, the House passed The Social Security Fairness Act repealing the Windfall Elimination Profit (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO) by a 327-75 vote. On December 21, the Senate passed the bill by a vote of 76-20. Congressional passage of the bill is a historic victory for the National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association (NARFE), which has been advocating for repeal of WEP and GPO for 40 years. It will bring substantial financial relief to federal retirees who have been unfairly penalized for their public service for decades. President Joe Biden signed the legislation into law at the White House on January 5 with

NARFE President William Shackelford, among other invitees, in attendance.

Source: www.narfe.org advocacy update January 6, 2025

Last Ditch Effort to Block Schedule F Thwarted by Senate Republicans

On December 16, led by Sen. Tim Kaine (D-VA), a group of lawmakers sought unanimous consent on the Senate floor to pass Kaine's Saving the Civil Service Act, a bill that would require the president to seek approval from Congress before instituting any new job categories within the federal civil service. The bill also sets up new restrictions on how jobs can be reclassified within the current system. Opposing Kaine's request on the Senate floor was Sen. Eric Schmitt (R-MO), who said the motion amounted to an effort to prevent the president-elect from following through on campaign promises to voters. Sen. Chris Van Hollen (D-MD) vowed to continue to fight to protect the workforce from politicization, aware of the long odds associated with the unanimous consent request.

Source: Government Executive, December 17, 2024

Reforming the Civil Service

Rep. Barry Loudermilk (R-GA) introduced The Modern Employment Reform, Improvement and Transformation Act ([HR 10397](https://www.congress.gov/bills/118/10397)) on December 12. The legislation proposes stark reforms to statutes governing the federal workforce, including streamlining the removal of an employee accused of poor performance or misconduct and removing certain employee appeals and union grievance processes. The legislation would repeal the existing statutes that govern how agencies handle poor performance, would amend rules to prevent employees subject to a grade reduction from being placed on administrative leave while they appeal and would allow agencies to fire them if they do not report to work. It would also require an agency, once it has determined evidence of employee misconduct or poor performance worthy of removal, to issue a decision within 15 days and without first administering a performance improvement plan. The MERIT Act also proposes removing senior executives rather than de-

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moting them, recouping bonuses and awards based on performance and conduct issues, removing select retirement benefits for employees convicted of a felony, ending union grievances based on adverse personnel actions — instead requiring direct appeals to the Merit System Protection Board — prohibiting furlough appeals and extending the employee probationary period to two years, up from one year.

Source: Government Executive, December 12, 2024

House Oversight and Accountability Committee

Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-VA), an advocate for improving federal employee pay and benefits, will lead Democrats on the House Oversight and Accountability Committee as ranking member when the new Congress begins in January. The panel has jurisdiction over federal personnel, the U.S. Postal Service, and supervises government operations. Therefore, Connolly will likely spearhead opposition to President-elect Donald Trump's plans to remove civil service job protections for potentially tens of thousands of federal employees under Schedule F, to possibly privatize USPS and to restructure federal agencies.

Source: Government Executive, December 17, 2024

Happy New Year
2025

Previous Chapter Meeting, December 18th

Chapter 356 held its annual Christmas/Holiday party with twelve members and three guests present. A floral arrangement, a gift bag, a cookie tin, and a music snow globe were raffled off and garnered \$200 for the NARFE Alzheimer's Fund. Grocery gift cards in an amount totaling \$455 were collected for SERVE.

A short business meeting was conducted with officer and committee reports. The recently elected officers were sworn in by Carol Campbell, VFN Area IX Vice-President, and Past Chapter President Jack Shipley. The Minutes of the November chapter meeting, as they appeared in the Newsletter, were approved and the Treasurer's Report was accepted. NARFE September dues have recently been received. Membership Chair Helen Brooks reported that the chapter currently has one-hundred and twenty members with a high of one-hundred and twenty-seven members during 2024. Alzheimer's Chair Marilyn Markman has done an excellent job of presenting new information on Alzheimer's research in the newsletters.

President Brandt provided a National Legislative update. Congress has passed a Continuing Resolution funding the Government through March 14, 2025. Since the House passed The Social Security Fairness Act repealing the Windfall Elimination Profit and Government Pension offset on November 12, the Senate must vote on the bill before they adjourn January 3. The bill has sixty-three co-sponsors, with only sixty votes needed to pass. In support of the bill, a rally was held on December 11 at the Capitol with NARFE President Bill Shackelford and other NARFE leadership members in attendance. Congressman Gerry Connolly, a NARFE member, was recently elected as the Minority Ranking member of the House Oversight and Accountability office. Senator Tim Kaine's bill for "Saving the Civil Service Act" did not pass.

At the October 25 Northern Virginia Caucus meeting, there was an interesting presentation from a representative with the "Senior Medicare Patrol" on methods to prevent scams targeting seniors. Vice-President Saboe is working on details for a presentation at the February meeting.

The VFN Conference will be held in Harrisonburg, VA, from April 6-9, 2025. The registration fee will be \$95 until February 13, 2025, and it will be \$120 after that date. Information has been posted to the VFN website.

The next regular meeting of Chapter 356 will be held on Wednesday, February 19, 2025, at Logan's Roadhouse on Sudley Road in Manassas at 11:30 am.

Carol G. Campbell
Secretary



Floral arrangement and other gifts raffled at Christmas/Holiday Luncheon garnering \$200 for the NARFE Alzheimer's Fund

Alzheimer's Corner

Marilyn Markman, RN

As we start the new year-can you believe 2025-I wish you all a very happy, healthy 2025.

I would like to share some information I received in an email sent by Leslie Kernisan MD: better-healthwhileaging.net.

This email is about medications that are bad for memory, or can make Alzheimer's symptoms worse. Aside from affecting memory, causing falls is another concern with these medications. If you notice a change in you or someone else's memory, look into the medications that are being taken.

There are 4 types of brain-slowng medications to avoid if memory is a concern. Some people will say- I have been taking these medications for years without a problem - so why be concerned now? Well, younger, healthier brains experience less dysfunction from the drugs, have more processing power, and are more resilient.

Here are the 4 types of meds to avoid - I will give the brand names – less confusing.

1. Benzodiazepines - often prescribed to help with sleep or anxiety. They work well but are habit-forming and have been associated with developing dementia. Ativan, Valium, Restoril and Xanax - never stop taking these medications on your own - taper off with medical supervision.
2. Non benzodiazepines- prescription sedatives- Ambiance, Sonata, and Lunesta. There have been studies linking these drugs with dementia. It is known that developing dementia is associated with sleep problems.
3. Anticholinergics- most over-the-counter sleeping pills like Benadryl and other prescription drugs have the opposite effect on an Alzheimer drug like Aricept.

Some other drugs to look out for are:

- Sedating antihistamines like Benadryl, the "PM" versions of over-the-counter analgesics- NyQuil, Tylenol-PM (the "PM" ingredient is usually a sedating antihistamine).

- Meds for overactive bladder - Ditropan and Detrox
- Meds for vertigo, motion sickness or nausea - Antivert, Scop and Phenergan
- Meds for itching - Visteril and Benadryl
- Muscle relaxants - Flexaril
- Tricyclic antidepressants - older type mainly used for nerve pain – Elavil and Pamlor. One popular antidepressant almost never used by geriatricians is Paxil.

- 4, Antipsychotics and mood stabilizers are usually prescribed to manage difficult behavior related to Alzheimer's and other dementias. All these medications are "second generation" – Risperdal, Seroquel, and Zyprexa. First generation antipsychotic, Haldol, is still sometimes used. If an antipsychotic is used it should be at the lowest dose!

Opioid pain medications are not on the list to avoid, but they do affect thinking abilities.

If you are interested in more information, [go to her website](#). Aside from all of the above information, she gives other suggestions for care, has a video explaining the medications, and you can get a pdf listing all the medications.

As we begin the new year let's remember all the doctors, nurses, and caregivers who are working to assist Alzheimer patients. Also, remember the researchers who are working hard thanks to your contributions through NARFE to treat and eventually eradicate this disease!

So, in 2025, Alzheimer's disease look out – here we come!

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:

No new webinars yet announced.

Recent NARFE Webinars:

Estate Planning for Feds

Thursday, December 12, 2024, 2:00 p.m. ET

An effective estate plan deals with both incapacity and death. Creating and implementing an effective estate plan will help to avoid messy legal battles and ensure state law doesn't dictate who takes care of you and who gets your money. Feds who understand the components of an effective estate plan, including the nuances of federal benefits, will be able to implement the proper strategies to ensure they will be taken care of during periods of incapacity and have their assets transfer to the heirs of choice in the most effective way possible.

[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

*No membership changes
this past month*

Chapter 356 membership as of
December 31 is 121 members.

Email Address Changes

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

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
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National Legislation	Vacant	
Program Comm.	Vacant	
Service Officer	Priscilla Saboe	703-361-1150
Sunshine Comm.	Priscilla Saboe	703-361-1150
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Chapter Chaplain	Vacant	
Newsletter Editor	Richard Horte	703-368-8767

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Use this address to contact officers and committee chairs by email

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.