



NARFE Chapter 1116 Newsletter

Vienna-Oakton Chapter 1116
2634 Skidmore Circle
Vienna, VA 22180-7121

FEBRUARY 2025

Next Chapter Meeting
Tuesday, February 11, 2025
Vienna Community Center (VCC)
1:00 PM
120 Cherry Street, SE
Vienna, VA 22180

Next Board Meeting
Thursday, February 27, 2025
Vienna Community Center
1:00 PM

2025 Board Chapter Officers

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

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

2nd Vice President &
Membership & Hostess
Jayne Seidman 703-938-2274

Secretary David Graf
703-938-2962

Treasurer & State Legislation
Chris Gieseler
703-849-0008

Board Members
Alzheimer's & Photographer
Mark Arpa 703-205-9041

National Legislation
Jim Hathaway 703-255-7135

Newsletter Team
Kathy Arpa, Dave Graf

Public Relations
Pec Chan 703-930-3596

Service Officer
Vacant

Sunshine
Harriet Epstein 703-560-4137

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE – KATHY ARPA

Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of the victims who were in the tragic midair plane and helicopter collision on Wednesday, January 29th at Reagan National Airport.

Well, Punxsutawney Phil saw his shadow on February 2nd! Thus, it seems like we might have six more weeks of winter. Many NARFE chapters had to cancel their meetings in January because of snow. We were lucky. I hope we are as lucky this month as our guest speaker will be traveling quite a distance. Our next meeting on February 11 will feature Gaston Gianni, our VFN National Legislation Chair. I hope you can join us.

Check out this link to read the letter to the editor of the Washington Post by our NARFE President. It is in PDF format and you can get it here: <https://vanarfe.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Shackelford-Letter-To-The-Washington-Post-Editor.pdf>

Our VFN Annual Meeting and Conference is coming up in April. [See details on page 2]

Happy Valentine's Day.

Kathy

MEMBERSHIP REPORT – JAYNE SEIDMAN

As of February 1, 2025, the membership for Chapter 1116 was as follows: 163 Total Chapter members, 142 Total National Members in Chapter Area, Grand Total = 305. We welcome our new chapter members Dana Dyson, James Allen, and William Clement.

If your current or former federal colleagues are nervous about their employment status, this would be an excellent time for them to join NARFE. The organization is committed to advocating for all employees and safeguarding Civil Service protections.

Inclement Weather Policy – If Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) close or open late because of inclement weather on the day of a chapter meeting, the in-person meeting is cancelled.

COMING UP

Tuesday, February 11, 2025 – Chapter Meeting - 1:00 PM – VCC. Guest Speaker – Gaston Gianni, (pictured here) VFN National Legislation Chair, who will talk about the issues that NARFE will focus on with the new Congress. There are plenty and it changes every day! He will also discuss the Social Security Fairness Act, H.R. 82, repealing WEP/GPO after 40 years.



Tuesday, March 11, 2025 – Chapter Meeting – 1:00 PM – VCC. Guest speaker - Shawn L. Smith, State Director, Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) will be talking about Medicare Frauds.

Sunday, April 6-9, 2025 - VFN Conference – Hotel Madison, Harrisonburg, VA – Info at www.vanarfe.org. Early bird deadline is **February 17, 2025**. (See info below)

Tuesday, April 15, 2025 – Chapter Meeting – 1:00 PM – Vienna Community Center. Guest speaker – Carolyn Pennington, Executive Director of the Shepherd’s Center of Northern Virginia. (Note this is the third Tuesday.)

2025 VFN ANNUAL MEETING & CONFERENCE Hotel Madison & Shenandoah Valley Conference Center 710 S. Main Street, Harrisonburg, VA 22801 April 6-9, 2025

This will be our **70th** anniversary! We encourage all VFN members, retired and active federal employees, to join us for this celebration. The Conference Committee is working hard to get great speakers, provide training, a silent auction and 50/50 raffle for Alzheimer’s Research, entertainment and great food. The preliminary agenda is:

Registration Hours: Sunday April 6, 2:00 pm – 5:00 pm
Monday April 7, 7:30 am – 9:00 am; Noon – 1:00 pm; and 2:00 pm – 5:00 pm
Tuesday April 8, 8:00 am – 12:00 noon

Convention Events:

Monday: April 7, *Opening Session* 9:00 am– 10:00; Sessions 10:00 - 12:00 noon and 1:00 – 5:00 pm
Welcoming Reception: 7:00 pm
Tuesday: April 8, Sessions 9:00 am – 12:00 noon and 1:00 – 5:00 pm
Social Hour 6:00 – 7:00 pm; *Banquet* 7:00 to 10:00 pm
Wednesday, April 9 *Closing Session* 9:00 am – 12:00 noon.

HOTEL INFORMATION

Hotel Madison & Shenandoah Valley Conference Center, Harrisonburg, VA 22801. Telephone (540) 564-0200.
Room Rate \$107.00 per night plus tax. Deadline for room reservations **March 17, 2025**
Group Name: Virginia Federation of NARFE Group Code: Virginia Federation of NARFE.
Check-In: Sunday, April 6, 2025. *Check Out:* Wednesday, April 9, 2025.

The Convention Registration form can be printed from the VFN website at www.vanarfe.org/conf2025. If you register by **February 17, 2025**, the registration fee is \$95.00. Registrations accepted after February 18, 2025, will cost \$120. Your registration includes conference material, the welcome reception on Monday night, the banquet on Tuesday night, lunch on Monday and Tuesday and five breaks. Plans are underway for special entertainment this year. **If you are interested in attending the 2025 VFN Conference, please contact Kathy Arpa at 703-205-9041 and she will bring a registration form for you to the February 11th meeting. The Chapter Budget will have some funds to reimburse members for a portion of their expenses.**

SUNSHINE REPORT

Condolences to Harriet Epstein on the passing of her son Marshall on January 7. He attended our Chapter Anniversary Celebration in June and our Holiday Party in December. Condolences to Doug Smith on the passing of his wife, Sandy.

REPORT ON DECEMBER HOLIDAY PARTY & CHAPTER MEETING

28 Chapter members and guests enjoyed our annual party which was held at Mulligans Pub on the Green in Fairfax, VA on December 10, 2024. Officers for 2025 were installed by Area X Vice President Ted Pasek. Certificates were given to Jim Hathaway for 23 years as a NARFE member and Nancy Burke-Sanow, outgoing secretary. Members enjoyed lunch and later desserts provided by Chapter Board Members. (See photos on page 7.)

REPORT ON JANUARY CHAPTER MEETING – DAVE GRAF

President Kathy Arpa called the Chapter Meeting to order at 1:10 PM on January 14, 2025, at the Vienna Community Center (VCC). Following the Pledge of Allegiance, there was a Moment of Silence for the victims of the California wild fires. Birthdays for December and January were recognized, and members sang Happy Birthday.

Programs Chair Ralph Dantine introduced the guest speaker, Laura Montz (pictured here). She presented a program entitled “Optimum Wellness and the Cornerstones of Anti-Aging.” Laura has always been interested in health and wellness. She stated that certain choices we make affect us today and tomorrow. We are each in the driver’s seat when it comes to our health. We make choices before, during, and especially after sickness. Some changes are drastic, some are minor.



Laura’s presentation focused on citing nine books by recognized authors in the fields of health, wellness, and aging. Significant themes and conclusions were highlighted from each book. In summary, Laura stated that there are four cornerstones to health:

- **NUTRITION** – “Fuel for Life”
- **MOVEMENT** – “Motion is the Lotion of Life”
- **STRESS MANAGEMENT** – “Stress Kills, Calm Heals”
- **PURPOSE** – “Fuels Your Spirit”

Optimum wellness is not just about living longer, it is about thriving as we age! The meeting recessed for refreshments and for members to talk with our speaker. *{Please contact me if you would like a list of the books and/or a link to her presentation.}*

Following the break, Kathy called the Business Meeting to order at 2:27 pm. Kathy reminded everyone that the Virginia Federation of NARFE (VFN) Conference will again be held at Hotel Madison and Shenandoah Valley Conference Center in Harrisonburg, VA on April 6-9, 2025 (*See details on page 2*). A sign-up for supporters for the Conference was circulated.

Kathy shared that several local chapters have luncheon meetings. The Fairfax Chapter meets at the Fairfax American Legion for lunch and the Dulles Chapter meets at the Amphora Restaurant in Herndon. We are very fortunate to meet at the Vienna Community Center at no cost and ample parking. A big round of applause was given to our Hostess Jayne Seidman for her organization and provision of refreshments and treats at our meetings. Kathy requested members to provide their thoughts and ideas for this year’s June Picnic and December Holiday Party to any Board member.

Secretary Dave Graf read the minutes of the November Membership Meeting, gave a report on the December Holiday Party, and read the Treasurer’s Report. Membership Chair Jayne Seidman reported the Chapter had 163 members.

State Legislation Chair Chris Gieseler gave the State legislation Report. The Virginia General Assembly began its 2025 Regular Session on Wednesday, January 8, 2025, in Richmond, but had to immediately recess the session due to a Richmond area-wide water shortage. The Legislature reconvened on January 13th and still expects to complete the work of the 45-day session on February 22nd by having members work on weekends, etc. Chris reported that bills had been introduced for three of the four priority areas that are in the VFN’s 2025 State Legislative Plan. No bills have been introduced to revise the Age 65+ age deduction for CSRS and FERS retirees.

National Legislation Chair Jim Hathaway gave the National Legislation Report. The Social Security Administration has already added a link at the top of its website with information about the new Social Security Fairness law. They are currently evaluating how to implement the act and will provide updates as soon as possible.

In the meantime, those who have previously filed for benefits should verify their current mailing address and direct deposit information online at www.ssa.gov/myaccount. For those who have not filed yet, you can do so at www.ssa.gov/apply or schedule an appointment. *[If you have any questions or need further assistance, please contact Jim].*

Jim also reported that the Social Security cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for 2025 will be 2.5%, which is the lowest annual increase in four years. The smaller adjustment is attributed to the normalization of annual inflation rates. The average Social Security beneficiary can expect to receive \$49 more per month.

Programs Chair Ralph Dantine announced the upcoming Chapter meetings and other local events. In new business, Kathy stated that there is a new facilities contact at the Vienna Community Center. The old contact, Nick Jones, had been very responsive to our needs and we thank him for his service. Margaret Murphy conducted a drawing for the 50/50 raffle to benefit the Alzheimer's Research Fund. The meeting adjourned at 3:18 pm.

TREASURER'S REPORT – CHRIS GIESELER AND DAVE GRAF

Since the December 2024-January 2025 combined Newsletter, the Chapter received \$418.92 in January 2025 for membership dues collected by NARFE's National Headquarters for October (\$165.64) and November 2024 (\$253.28). The lateness and differing amounts of deposits occurred because Headquarters has had problems with its software update. As a result, there were delays in remitting dues collections to individual chapters. Also, the dues amount varies each month depending on the type of memberships (1-year, 2-year, etc.) that members have and the anniversary dates of the member joining NARFE.

There have been several expenses. The first expense was \$34.49 to reimburse Kathy Arpa for the purchase of ID badges for the Chapter's new Treasurer and Secretary. The second expense was \$200 for the Chapter's annual donation (as authorized by the approved 2024 Budget) paid to the Town of Vienna, Parks & Recreation for use of the Vienna Community Center's meeting rooms.

The 50/50 raffle drawings for Alzheimer's Research at the December 2024 Holiday Party (\$75) and the January 14, 2025, Chapter meeting (\$34) raised a total of \$109. The \$75 donation was sent to the Virginia Federation of NARFE Coordinator for the NARFE Alzheimer's Research Fund along with a member's \$1,000 IRA distribution check. The total contribution for 2024 was \$2,340. Also at the Holiday Party, checks and cash totaling \$190 were received and sent to the Marine Toys for Tots Foundation.

The draft of the Chapter Budget for Calendar Year 2025 was submitted to the Board of Directors at their meeting on January 23, 2025, for their consideration and approval. After some discussion, the Board increased some line-item amounts. The revised version of the draft 2025 budget was then approved by the Board and will be presented to the Chapter's membership for discussion and adoption at the upcoming February 11, 2025, Chapter Meeting.

Regarding the financial results for 2024, expenses exceeded income; but for the fifth consecutive year expenses were less than the approved budget amounts. Projected income for 2025 will be higher due to National's delay issuing dues receipts in the final months of last year. Proposed expenses for 2025 are a bit above actual expenses for 2024 because the Chapter is budgeting money to reimburse members for some of their expenses for attending the VFN Annual Meeting and Conference in April 2025 in Harrisonburg, Virginia, and/or the NARFE Region X Conference in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, in October 2025.

LEGISLATION REPORTS

NATIONAL LEGISLATION REPORT– JIM HATHAWAY

The Department of Government Efficiency

I wanted to share some interesting news about the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) under the leadership of Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy.

Initially announced after Trump's win in November, DOGE was envisioned to provide advice and guidance from outside the government. Musk and Ramaswamy encouraged everyday Americans to apply for positions at DOGE. Their expressed aim was to significantly cut back the federal budget, roll back regulations, and reform government agencies. They promised to staff the advisory board with a "lean team of small government crusaders".

DOGE was officially created by executive order on January 20, 2025 (Inauguration Day). It is part of the White House, replacing the Obama-era US Digital Service (USDS). The USDS had focused on improving government websites and technology, and its unit had grown to over 200 people. In contrast, Musk's new team is reported to consist of 20 staff members. It looks like some Silicon Valley leaders are getting involved. DOGE has hired a few full-time, salaried roles in engineering, HR, IT, and finance, though Musk mentioned that employees might be unpaid.

Vivek Ramaswamy is no longer a co-leader of DOGE, as he is expected to run for Governor of Ohio. Experts believe that bringing DOGE inside the federal government could help avoid legal issues, but it also introduces new transparency and ethical rules, especially concerning public information laws.

DOGE's mission, according to the executive order, is to "implement the President's DOGE Agenda by modernizing Federal technology and software to maximize governmental efficiency and productivity". Meanwhile, President Trump has tasked the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to have federal agencies compile lists of workers who could be easily dismissed, reminiscent of DOGE's initial goals.

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



Congratulations on the passage of the Social Security Fairness Act. National President and Fairfax Chapter member, Bill Shackelford represented NARFE at the signing of the WEP/GPO repeal bill by President Biden on Sunday January 5, 2025. This provides law enforcement, fire fighters, and teacher groups as well as Federal retirees an opportunity to receive Social Security benefits. The WEP and GPO provisions had reduced or eliminated Social Security benefits for those who are covered by a government (federal, state, or local) sponsored guaranteed pension plan, such as federal employees who are covered by the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS). The WEP currently impacts approximately 2 million Social Security beneficiaries, and the GPO impacts nearly 800,000 retirees.

The Social Security Fairness Act will take over a year to implement. This delay is due to staffing shortages and Congress not providing funding to implement the law.

- The law affects approximately 3 million people.
- The average monthly benefit increase is estimated at \$360, but some recipients could see raises exceeding \$1,000.
- Since the law's effective date is retroactive to January 2024, the SSA must adjust both past and future benefits, along with retroactive lump sum payments.
- The Social Security Administration (SSA) advises patience as they prioritize implementing the new law, which may cause delays in other services.

Implementing this new and unfunded workload is made more difficult by ongoing staffing shortages, including operating under a hiring freeze since November 2024. This hiring freeze is likely to continue. All SSA customers, including those not affected by the Act, will likely face delays and increased wait times as SSA prioritizes this new workload.

VIRGINIA STATE LEGISLATION REPORT – CHRIS GIESELER

VFN Legislative Item: 20% Exemption of CSRS Benefits from State Income Taxes

Despite the valiant lobbying efforts of the Legislative Team of the Virginia Federation of NARFE (VFN), two pieces of legislation in the Virginia General Assembly that would grant a deduction (technically, a “subtraction”) from Virginia income taxes of 20% of Civil Service Retirement System benefits failed. It was good to know that this VFN legislative priority made its way into bills that were introduced in the General Assembly.

VFN Legislative Item: Sunset of Current Standard Deduction

Here is some good news about the standard deduction currently in effect for Virginia income taxes. HB 1754 would retain that standard deduction (\$17,000 joint filer/\$8,500 individual filers) in 2025 and would INCREASE the deduction to \$18,500 (joint filers) and \$9,250 (individual filers) in 2026. In addition, starting in 2027 and going forward, the standard deduction would be indexed for inflation. Delegate Vivian Watts introduced the bill. The Chair of the Finance Committee, and the Committee unanimously referred the bill to the House Appropriations Committee for consideration.

On the Senate side, the counterpart to the House bill is SB 782. It was combined with two other bills to remove the existing sunset dates on the current standard deduction. This bill is in the Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee.

Bottom line, it seems that this VFN Legislative priority to remove the standard deduction sunset date for 2025 will be enacted. And, there may even be an increase in the standard deduction and possible future indexing of the amount for 2026 and beyond. I will monitor what the House Appropriations and Senate Finance and Appropriations Committees do with their respective versions of this legislation and how the Committees will resolve the differences that exist between those versions.

VFN Legislative Item: Nursing Home Priorities

Senate bill SB 1152 was “passed by for the day” on January 31, 2025. The bill would require the State Board of Health to establish regulations regarding requirements for general liability insurance and professional liability insurance for nursing homes and certified nursing facilities. The amount of insurance coverage is to be about \$3 million, depending on what is being covered. The purpose of the insurance coverage is to protect patients and other individuals regarding injuries that are due to negligent or criminal acts at the facility. Failure to maintain the required insurance coverage could result in loss of the facility’s license unless corrected within 10 days.

House bill HB 2468 contains provisions regarding certain nursing staff (“medication aids”) at nursing homes, certified nursing facilities and assisted living facilities who can administer medications to patients. These staff members will need to register with the state, and there are different types of medication aids subject to requirements of the Department of Health and the Board of Nursing. This bill has been “engrossed” in the House, so it looks like passage of the bill is imminent.

I will continue to monitor and report back on these bills and any other nursing home legislation.

“Cross Over Day” in the General Assembly will occur on Tuesday, February 4, 2025. This is the day that bills completed by the respective chambers in the General Assembly cross over for action by the other chamber. So, there will be a flurry of activity to complete actions on their respective bills. The Budget bills have a different time schedule and thus do not have to crossover on the 4th.

[The information in this report is as of January 31, 2025.]

**SCENES FROM NARFE CHAPTER 1116 (Vienna-Oakton) HOLIDAY PARTY
December 10, 2024**



2025 Officers - Kathy Arpa, Ralph Dantinne, Jayne Seidman, Dave Graf, Chris Gieseler



<< Jim Hathway & Kathy Arpa



Nancy Burke-Sanow– outgoing secretary >>



Lots of
desserts! >>

<<<<Installation
by Ted Pasek,
Area X Vice
President



Gift exchange, 50/50 for Alzheimer's Research and
Toys for Tots collection >>

