



ANNANDALE CHAPTER NEWS

National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association Chapter 1159 (Annandale)

P.O. Box 1463, Annandale, VA 22003

Serving Current, Former & Retired Federal Employees and Spouses
and Survivor Annuitants

Like us on Facebook at NARFE-Annandale 1159

Our meetings are hybrid, with in-person and Zoom attendance
We meet in-person at the Mason District Governmental Center
6507 Columbia Pike, Annandale, Virginia

March 2025

Join us, either in-person or via Zoom, for our next meeting at 10:00 a.m., Wednesday, April 2nd, when we will have a presentation by an NBC meteorologist from TV Channel 4. For details regarding the program, as well as information on registering for the Zoom meeting, see page 2.

PREZ SEZ – Our country faces a distressing and frightening time. It feels as though we're losing our country, democracy, sanity, and any feeling of safety. We watch federal agencies being demolished; employees fired with no regard for services they provided. Outrageously, this includes people providing programs funding meals at schools for needy kids, working to ensure foods safety, testing new drugs to ensure safety, assisting veterans, and many others. Firing 83,000 employees from the Veterans Administration - an agency already understaffed - will cause a crisis for many of our warriors. Our national security is at risk when an unelected person reveals highly sensitive information. I wish I had a magic ball to predict where this will end. We must each, in our own way, fight when and where we can. Supporting NARFE's efforts is one way to contribute; donating or working in political organizations fighting the madness is another.

We must stay informed on sites such as govexec.com and NARFE Newsletter Daily News. Fairfax and Arlington Counties have been **(continued on page 2)**

(continued from page 1) having job fairs and NOVA Community College's has a new program series for fired Federal employees and contractors. The Council of Governments launched a new website with information and resources about job fairs for fired Federal employees. It also gives context about the impact these Federal firings may have on the DMV and elsewhere. Chambers of Commerce also can help and some credit unions are offering loans. Also, please see our section on Career Opportunities and Resources on Page 8.

Besides staying up-to-date on how changes will affect retirees, we can pass information to fellow Federal employees still working or who have been fired. I will be attending the Virginia 2025 NARFE Conference and hope to learn and share with you ways to help fight what is going on. We may not be in a position to provide much guidance but we will do our best to get out as much information as possible to all concerned. If you feel you have information helpful to retirees and active or fired employees, please email me so we can get that information out.

Kim Rendelson, Chapter President

A Few Details for Our April 2nd Meeting – At 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday morning April 2nd, at the Mason District Governmental Center (6507 Columbia Pike in Annandale), we will have an in-person hybrid presentation by an NBC meteorologist from TV Channel 4. While in-person attendance is encouraged, to attend on Zoom, let **Doug Jones** know (doujones500@verizon.net or **703-425-3361**) no later than **Monday, March 31st**, so he can send you the meeting link and passcode.

Save the Date – Our Chapter **Spring Luncheon** will be on **Wednesday, June 4th** at **The Italian Café** (7161 Lee Highway, Falls Church). Mark your calendars and join us. It is a great time to socialize, meet old friends and make new acquaintances. Details and a reservation form will be in next month's newsletter.

<p><u>WEB ADDRESS</u> – Please note our web homepage continues experiencing difficulties. For the latest information on our Chapter, please use our Facebook page at NARFE -- Annandale 1159.</p>

March Program Report – Our guest speaker was **Cheryl Crowe**. She is the **Virginia State Director of the Humane World for Animals (formerly the Humane Society of the United States) Legislative Fund**. The Humane Society International, which protects animals in 50 countries, will also be called Humane World for Animals. Her efforts are focused on statewide initiatives before the Richmond legislature.

Pet ownership is something that brings people together. The organization seeks



Cheryl Crowe discussing the efforts of the Humane Society.

to get to the root cause of animal cruelty and suffering and to create, as the name suggests, a world that is more humane for animals. Cruel practices and neglect are things that they investigate and expose, but local and national laws do not always allow law enforcement to alleviate those situations. Each state is a different set of circumstances and political realities as well as variance in the laws. The Society also responds to natural disasters, offering sanctuary and

rehabilitation where they can. Interaction with other states is often necessary and the rules and regulations for taking animals across state lines may need to be addressed. So, the organization helps shelters and rescue organizations. They seek partnerships and grants to assist these efforts and to provide training to educate local, state, and national groups. She defined her work as “building bridges” and promoting changes to the laws that are sensible and establish standards so that there is sufficient guidance and enforcement.

The legislative process is, by nature, a slow process with many steps. Working with elected leaders to help construct laws that are practical, resourced, and effective as well as humane is a key objective. The organization has a facility in Gaithersburg, Maryland and helping strays and local pets is one of their initiatives. Ms. Crowe presented a slide describing how many steps were included in the legislative process in Virginia; a process that must occur in a very short period (45 days on odd years, 90 days on even years). The entire **(continued on page 4)**

(continued from page 3) process through one house must then be passed to the other house before it can go to the governor for signature. The Society holds Animal Lobby days, which are filled with participants visiting legislators and staff in the statehouse and establishing or reinforcing networks so they have access to help structure good laws.

Preventing cruelty includes rules that regulate ownership and trade, promote good animal welfare, educating the public, improving the quality of life, and ending unethical use or practices. Exotic animals are a particular concern, especially in how they are housed, bred, and transported. Besides the welfare of the animal, there is also concern for general public health issues as animals are transferred and transported. One specific concern is the removal of young animals too soon from their mothers.

Recent efforts of the Society have dealt with the ability to extend pet inclusive housing rules so that individuals may have their pets with them in rental units. The Society also is seeking to end wildlife killing contests and addressing issues with small, unaffiliated pet stores (around 18 in Virginia now) and puppy mills. The rules for health documentation of animals in transport are part of the work of the Federal government agencies as well as Virginia's. Record keeping by the USDA is not complete and so the Society collects data so that investigations can be pursued.

Ms. Crowe invited interested parties to volunteer or to receive updates and provided her email address: ccrowe@humanesociety.org.

Total attendance was **41 (34 in-person and seven on Zoom)**. Snacks were provided by **Mary Ann Munley, Fran Walinsky, Frank Toth, John Bankson, Loretta Nester, Ed Reniker, Joyce Price, Carol Rubin, Mark Doehnert, Sue Hoffman, Pat Jack, Jenna Arvanitis and Sharon Sellers**. Snacks not enjoyed during our meeting were provided to the Mason District Police and Supervisor Andres Jimenez's staff.

Ed Reniker, Secretary

Alzheimer's Report – I was asked about biomarkers at the last membership meeting. This is what I found: there are at least five biomarkers that are being checked out in the research. Brain imaging, Cerebrospinal fluid (CSF), blood tests, genetic testing, and tau proteins. The biomarker that is most prominent is the CSF, which means drawing a sample from the spine. But, there is a lot of research needed to determine the best biomarker. I will keep an eye on the subject and report to you for anything definitive. Please continue to make donations to the NARFE Alzheimer's Research Fund so that this research is continued. You can send a donation by mail to: **Treasurer, NARFE Chapter 1159, P.O. Box 1463, Annandale, VA, 22003**. Please make checks payable to *NARFE Alzheimer's Research Fund* and include *Chapter 1159* on the memo line.

Phil Gilliland, Alzheimer's Chair

Legislation Report -- Let's start with some good news:



HR82 Social Security Fairness Act: The retroactive payments for the amount of WEP deducted from affected 2024 Social Security Checks are arriving. The April 2025 monthly Social Security payment should be paid at the correct value, i.e., no more WEP! Those previously affected by GPO and applying for Spousal Benefits are also receiving their spousal benefits. And, many are receiving Social Security's explanation of the retro payments.

2025 Federal Budget: Good News – government shutdown avoided. Bad News – yet another Continuing Resolution (CR) that expires at the end of FY 2025. The House narrowly passed a controversial spending CR bill; then the Senate also narrowly passed the CR bill which has now been signed into law by the Administration. Overall, the CR bill trims \$13 billion from FY 2024 non-defense spending levels and increases Defense spending by \$6 billion. Holding most Departments and agencies to FY 2024 levels does not take into account inflation over the past 18 months, so cuts will need to be made. While the non-defense cuts don't seem too dire, within the suggested spending allocations there are shifts in funding. Of concern is \$50 billion in cuts from Government Operations – which includes our federal pay and retirement benefits, which are substantial. We must all stay vigilant and respond to NARFE Calls for Action (**continued on page 6**)

(continued from page 5) as the cuts are contemplated for the remainder of FY 2025 and proposed for FY 2026.

2026 Federal Budget: The House issued its “blueprint” for its view of funding through 2034. The “blueprint” calls for additional cuts, but also addresses changes current federal tax policies which sunset at the close of 2025. Thus, without legislation, we will revert the Tax Laws in effect in 2017. Still outstanding is a decision on the Debt Ceiling: keep it, toss it, or raise it. And, we have only 6 months until the start of FY 2026, my bet is that a Continuing Resolution will be required to fund the start of the new Fiscal Year. Stay tuned.

USPS and DOGE: The Postmaster General (PMG) advised Congress that he has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with DOGE to allow DOGE to come into the Postal Service, and also a VERA offer to hopefully reduce complement by 10,000 employees. Among several areas cited for review by DOGE are “uncontrollable” expenses for the USPS, and first among those are retiree benefits which the PMG has discussed in his Annual Reports. As you should be aware, starting 2025 postal retirees are no longer in the FEHBP Health Benefits, and while the new 2025 PSHBP was required by the Postal Reform Legislation to be very similar in offering and cost to FEHBP for 2025, those guardrails come off in 2026. The PMG expressed his concerns with applied COLAs and management/investment of the actual retirement funds. As I always say, watch closely the recommendations for the USPS because they might be coming your way in the future.

Virginia Legislation: The Virginia General Assembly (GA) adjourned its 2025 Session February 22, 2025, reopened for its 2025 Special Session the same day. The GA passed almost 920 bills and the Governor has until March 24th to act on the bills by either: signing, vetoing or amending the bills. The Governor also has “line-item” veto power with respect to the provisions of the HB Budget Bill. The GA reconvenes on April 2, 2025 to consider the Governor’s vetoes and/or amendments.



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(continued from page 6) Some of the bills which have been sent to the Governor: HB 1600 Budget Bill which amends the Commonwealth's current 2-year budget which not only includes keeping the current Virginia Standard Deduction but also increasing it in 2025 by \$250 single/\$500 Joint filers. The Governor MAY agree. Taxpayers MAY receive a one-time VA income tax rebate (\$200 Single/\$400 Joint filer) in early October 2025, with possible issuance in early October 2025. The minimum wage in VA MAY increase to \$15 an hour by 2027. Paid family and medical leave coverage MAY be expanded. Plus, the GA established the new House Emergency Committee on the Impacts of Federal Workforce and Funding Reductions which is to consider the impact on the Commonwealth of the Federal Budget and employment reductions and to consider any legislation and budget amendments which MAY be necessary to address the impact.

I would like to mention that at our MAY 7th Chapter meeting, we will have the *Report from Richmond* with **Delegate Vivian Watts** and, hopefully, **Senator Dave Marsden** to learn what how all this turns out.

Mary Ann Munley, Legislation Chair

NARFE-PAC **March is NARFE PAC Month** -- The March *NARFE Magazine* highlights why “NARFE PAC is Our Best Defense”. Everyone should read the article before you decide on your contribution to NARFE PAC. NARFE PAC funding contributed to education of Congress on the WEP/GPO impacts and thus the successful passage of HR82 which not only eliminated WEP/GPO but resulted in some remediation for the 2024 WEP/GPO amounts. The March *NARFE Magazine* also contains the listing of NARFE's Advocacy Positions for the 119th Congress – as we know, the Federal Service (active and retired) is under attack. For those receiving retro-WEP/GPO payments, please consider contributing some of your “windfall” to the NARFE PAC which will use those funds to advance the remaining federal issues in Congress. Everyone (active and retired) should support NARFE PAC as all of our federal benefits are at risk. (*Please remember, contributions to PACs are not Tax deductible.*)

CAREER OPTIONS, OPPORTUNITIES AND RESOURCES

The last couple of months have been very disruptive and anxious for most Federal employees and retirees, with agency closings, employee layoffs and the possibility of future large scale RIFS and reduction/elimination of our earned Federal benefits. Everyone has a number of questions about the future – more than there are answers for right now. At the Chapter level, in particular, we are not in a position to provide much guidance on what is happening now or in the future. We thought the most useful thing we can do to help is provide resources on what is happening, and direction to some sites that might assist in deciding what to do going forward.

The best place to start, if you have not already done so, is to go to **NARFE's website** (www.narfe.org). If you click on *Emerging Threats to the Federal Community*, you can find NARFE's *Issue Brief* outlining possible cuts to your earned Federal benefits and access to NARFE's webinars, which include presentations on considering retirement options and information on your rights.

Other good sources are at the websites for our Congressional Offices. For example, **Senator Kaine's website** includes information on your rights and filing for unemployment benefits (<https://www.kaine.senate.gov/federalworkers>); and **Senator Warner's website** also contains information on your rights and filing a complaint (<https://www.warner.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?p=resources-for-federal-employees>).

Also, our local governments have set-up sites to provide help:

for **Virginia**, go to: <https://virginiahasjobs.com/2025/02/19/click-here-for-resources-if-youre-an-impacted-federal-worker/> ;

for **Fairfax County** go to <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/news/help-residents-affected-federal-workforce-restructuring> and for current openings in the County go to <https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/fairfaxcounty>.

and, the **Arlington County Library** has assembled an online guide to services and programs that features career development resources and support at <https://library.arlingtonva.libguides.com/c.php?g=1454938&p=10816262>.

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Civic Match by Work for America is a nonpartisan program connecting federal workers with potential jobs in state and local governments -- <https://www.workforamerica.org/civicmatch>.

We hope some of these may be helpful for those of you who need them. They are just a few of the resources currently available to assist Federal employees at this time and we will try to provide up-dated information as we obtain it.

Mark your calendars and join us for our May Chapter Meeting on Wednesday, May 7th, when we will have our annual Report from Richmond. At that time, Virginia Delegate Vivian Watts and, we hope, Senator Dave Marsden will tell us what happened in this year's session of the Virginia General Assembly. (While the meeting will be available in-person and on Zoom, please join us in-person, if you can.).

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Inclement Weather Policy --When Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) are closed or virtual only because of inclement weather on the day of a scheduled chapter meeting, the chapter meeting (both in-person and on Zoom) for that month is cancelled. If the FCPS open only 2 hours late on the day of a chapter meeting, the in-person and the Zoom meeting will be held.