

NARFE

FEDERAL BENEFITS EXPERTS

Reaching Out

April 2025

Arlington, VA Chapter 7

National Active & Retired Federal Employees Association

Meetings: 2nd Wed of Month Sept through May (except December) Beech Rm, Lubber Run Community Ctr, 300 N. Park Dr., Arlington - 12:15 p.m.

President's Message

Pat Meyers

Happy Spring to all of you. How nice to feel the warm sun and see the trees and flowers come to life again. To those of you who were unable to attend our March meeting, you missed a good pizza lunch and a most informative program by our member, Wes Gewehr, on the subject of taxes. There were 25 in attendance and much lively discussion. Since we expect new tax laws next year, we've already engaged Wes to return next March.

Our speaker for the April 9th program will be Emma Mahler, a dementia support specialist from the RAFT project team. As you'll likely recall, we had that presentation scheduled for January and then February but had to cancel both meetings due to snow. So finally, in April, Emma will present a program on support services available for patients and caregivers, including tips for maintaining caregiver resilience. The RAFT project (Regional Older Adult Facility Team) reaches out to all Northern Virginia counties. Since more people are living longer, many of whom wish to age in place, the need and role of caregivers for parents, spouses, siblings etc. is increasing. Come and hear how this project supports patients and caregivers.

I, along with Rita Rutsohn and Dan Perch, will be attending the annual VFN Conference in Harrisonburg so will be unable to attend the April meeting. However, 1st VP/Legislation Chair, Ed Weiler, will chair the meeting and present our speaker. It promises to be an exciting conference, including speakers such as Senator Tim Kaine, former 7th District Congresswoman, Abigail Spanberger (now running for Governor of Virginia), NARFE National President Bill Shackelford, and NARFE Staff VP for Policy & Programs, John Hatton, among others.

SAVE THE DATE: Thursday, June 12, 2025 when we will have our annual spring luncheon and welcome Delegate Patrick Hope as our speaker. The location is the Italian Cafe in Falls Church. Look for details and registration forms in our May newsletter.

LEGcon25 – June 9-11, 2025

Are you ready to elevate your grassroots advocacy expertise? Registration opened this month for LEGcon25, NARFE's premier virtual grassroots training event, where NARFE members learn to advocate for NARFE's legislative priorities and be an active participant in protecting and defending their federal

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benefits. Policy experts and congressional leaders and staff will address NARFE's legislative priorities and outlook for the 119th Congress. After a day and a half of trainings, the conference culminates with a virtual lobbying day where you are able to talk directly to your lawmakers and/or their staff about NARFE issues. In addition to preparing you for those meetings, the trainings will help you implement bold ideas to improve your advocacy skills and become a more influential advocate by building and sustaining relationship with key decision-makers. Check out legcon.narfe.org for more information

Legislative Corner

Ed Weiler

House Budget Resolution (*H.Con Res. 14*)

Potentially Puts FEHBP "Voucherization" Back in Play

Much like a patient hitchhiker, ideas on Capitol Hill hang around until an accommodative vehicle comes along. My first encounter with the notion that the Federal Government should no longer cover (on average) 70 percent of our health care premiums was included in the Bowles-Simpson "Moment of Truth Report" from December 2010. Over the succeeding years, due in no small part to the efforts of NARFE, FEHBP voucherization has been held at bay amid chronic budget battles on the Hill.

But there can always be a first time. Back in February of this year, the House on a party-line vote passed *H.Con.Res. 14*, which, according to John Hatton (Staff VP for Policy and Programs at NARFE) could result in the conversion of the FEHBP into a defined-contribution premium support program. How so? As pointed out by Hatton, the *Resolution* requires the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (the Committee with jurisdiction over Federal pay and personnel matters) to cut \$50 billion from programs under its jurisdiction over a 2025-2034 budgetary period. Current levels of Federal funding for the FEHBP, along with Federal funding of FERS-covered workers' retirement accounts, constitute a large share of program funding under the Oversight and Reform Committee, and thus are likely targets for cuts that will have to be made in order to meet the targeted spending reduction.

For the balance of FY2025, we're out of the woods, since the recently-passed Continuing Resolution for this fiscal year does not entail any such cuts. Once again, the proverbial can has been kicked down the road. It would be reasonable to expect, however, that FEHBP voucherization will be part of the discussion when the Hill gets around to cobbling together a budget for FY2026. While we had many allies among state and local government workers/retirees with a direct stake in the outcome of our successful campaign for WEP-GPO repeal, such is not the case for survival of the FEHBP. This is exclusively a Federal worker/retiree issue, and thus NARFE and allied Federal unions will have to do all the heavy lifting. Stay tuned, and respond quickly to any Advocacy Alert from NARFE that might come your way in the coming months.

State Legislation

Enhanced Standard Deduction for the Virginia State Income Tax

As you might recall, one of the planks in the Virginia Federation of NARFE's (VFN's) 2025 State Legislative Plan called for support of bills carried over from the 2024 Session of the General Assembly that would

make permanent more recently-enacted standard deduction levels—*viz.*, \$8,500 for single, and \$17,000 for married couples filing jointly. (Absent this legislation, standard deduction amounts after January 1, 2026 would have reverted to drastically lower levels that prevailed back in 2005). The path to approval was somewhat convoluted, in that neither of the bills passed as freestanding statutes, but instead were incorporated into a bill that amended the State Budget. Whatever it takes, and goodness knows we all need *something* to smile about these days, right?

HB 2768: A Bill to Allow for Changes in the Structure of Arlington County's Government

Among other things, this bill (as passed by the General Assembly) would allow for the Arlington County Board to call for a referendum to change its size, or to change its composition from members-at-large to single-member districts. Special note should be taken of the phrase, “allow for.” At his recent Town Hall meeting (3/1/2025), the bill’s sponsor, Del. Patrick Hope stressed the importance of its permissive nature, in that it would *authorize*, but not *require* the County Board to act. The bill also features a “reenactment clause,” meaning that it would have to be passed again by the General Assembly in 2026 in order for it to become law.

As it has turned out, however, *HB 2768* ran afoul of Governor Youngkin’s veto pen, and thus will have to start all over again in next year’s session of the General Assembly if this process is ever to be given a chance to move forward. According to *ARL.now.com* (3/26/25), Del. Hope is prepared to do just that, and is predicting victory in 2026.

In any event, Del. Hope will be the keynote speaker at Chapter 7’s upcoming Spring 2025 Luncheon (June, 12, 2025) at the Italian Café in Falls Church. As I see it, the process prescribed in *HB2768* offers us a rare opportunity for us to have a focused discussion on how our County should be governed. Save the date, and bring your thoughts and questions.

Membership Report

Nancy Palmerino

We wish long-time member Robert Brodsky all the best in his relocation to Austin, Texas. We currently have 245 Chapter members and an additional 515 National members in our chapter area for a total of 760 Chapter and National members. Our chapter memberships include 63 1-year members, 33 2-year members, 81 3-year members, 58 dues withholding members and 10 Life members. It is interesting to note that since last month we have added 69 new National only members who live in the Arlington area. Over 200 new members have joined NARFE in Virginia since the beginning of the year.

Now is the perfect time to approach friends, family, neighbors and colleagues who are current or retired Federal employees, spouses or surviving spouses of those eligible to join NARFE, former federal employees or a former spouse who is entitled to a federal survivor annuity, about the benefits of joining NARFE. Encourage them to join you and put their weight behind a legislative powerhouse that is determined to defend the federal community.

It’s easy for anyone to join. Go to narfe.org, and click on Membership for a list of benefits and the opportunity to join. There is always a membership form in each issue of the NARFE magazine, and we will also have membership brochures and information at each of our chapter meetings.

April is Arlington Preparedness Month

Arlington County

Disasters don't plan ahead, but you can. Arlington Preparedness Month, recognized each April, is an opportunity for everyone to assess their emergency plans, create or update emergency kits, and take the necessary steps to ensure you and your loved ones are ready for any situation. Prepare for an emergency using these free and low-cost tips: 1) Sign up for Arlington Alert. 2) Check your home for extra emergency kit supplies, 3) Make an emergency plan, 4) Visit your local dollar store for emergency kit essentials, 5) Practice your household emergency plan, 6) Find free templates at ReadyArlington.com.

For more information on how to prepare during Arlington Preparedness Month, visit www.arlingtonva.us/prepmoonth and follow @ReadyArlington on social media

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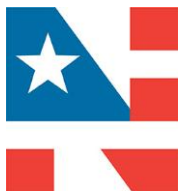
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