

NARFE

FEDERAL BENEFITS EXPERTS

Reaching Out

June 2023

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

It was great seeing everyone at our May meeting and am so glad the weather cooperated! We enjoyed VFN National Legislation Chair Gaston Gianni's visit and his very comprehensive presentation on NARFE national legislation issues, advocacy and PAC. While NARFE has played a big role in supporting the Social Security Fairness Act and other issues, our work to advocate for federal employees and retirees continues as does the need for PAC funds. Gaston's slides have been received and will be attached to the electronic version of this newsletter. For those who do not have a computer, a paper copy will be available upon request.

Chapter 7 members are to be congratulated for their contributions to the National PAC. As of 12/31/2024, Chapter 7 ranked 2nd among all VFN chapters in contributions toward the 118th Congress, totaling \$5,728. In an update for the 1st quarter of 2025 (119th Congress), our speaker noted that Chapter 7 **ranked #1** in VFN chapter contributions (\$1950.) Let's keep up the good work! Mr. Gianni also encouraged members to become "sustainers" who are members having \$10+ monthly amounts deducted automatically via annuity withholding or credit card and directed to the PAC. Chapter 7 has 2 sustainers to date. The VFN goal for the 119th Congress is to increase from 38 sustainers.

Thanks to Rita Rutsohn and Dan Perch for sharing their perspectives on the recent VFN conference as first-timers. It was indeed timely since Mr. Gianni is a member of the committee analyzing the conference and was appreciative of their input. Another thank you to Dan for also helping to furnish refreshments at the meeting.

Be sure to look out for the electronic ballot for the two contested VFN offices of President and First Vice President. Information on the candidates and the two bylaws' changes can be found by clicking on the Elections tab on the vanarfe.org website. Paper ballots will be available upon request for those not using computers. Please vote!

Finally, just a reminder to get luncheon reservations to me **by June 6th**. This will be our last chapter get-together until fall, so over the summer, I encourage you to consider helping the chapter by serving on one of our committees or as a chair. Your Board needs your help. Enjoy your summer!

Legislative Corner

Ed Weiler

June 2025

House Oversight and Government Reform Committee Takes a Machete To Our Benefits

When I first joined NARFE back in 2006 and attempted to recruit others as well, a frequent response I received was to the effect of: *they* wouldn't do *that*---meaning that Congress would never consider rolling back our promised benefits. Don't look now, but in its April 30th mark-up session of the Reconciliation Bill making its way through the House, the Oversight and Government Reform Committee took a first step in doing just that. Let's look at some of the key provisions that would:

- increase the FERS contribution rate for all employees to 4.4%, regardless of when they were hired;
- eliminate the FERS annuity supplement for all otherwise-eligible Federal employees, except those in occupations subject to mandatory early retirement;
- change the FERS annuity calculation from "high-3" to "high-5" of an employee's salary; and
- make all new Federal hires "at-will" employees unless they would agree to make an additional 5% FERS contribution (thereby, in effect universalizing the proposed Schedule P/C concept).

If there is any good news to be had in this litany of cuts, it's that the widely-feared "voucherization" of our health insurance benefits (the FEHBP) was not included. Over the years there has been much talk of eliminating the Government's fixed premium share (about 70% on average), and replacing it with an annual flat contribution (or "voucher").

As reported in Chapter 7's April newsletter, the Oversight and Reform Committee was charged with the task of identifying \$50 billion in potential cuts in order to allow for other Republican priorities in the Reconciliation Bill. According to Drew Friedman at FederalNewsNetwork.com (5/1/25), the proposed 4.4% across-the-board increase in the FERS contribution would ring up \$30 billion (or 60 %) of the targeted \$50 billion in cuts. Perhaps this sizable "contribution" took some of the pressure off the perceived need to whack our FEHBP benefits? Perhaps...but as Rep. Mike Turner (R-OH), the only Republican to vote against the marked-up bill, Federal worker benefits, "...are not a gift; they are earned." ("Daily Labor Report," 5/5/25, accessed at BloombergLaw.com).

Overall, these proposed cutbacks and changes to Federal workers' benefits suggest an underlying policy goal of making Federal employment highly undesirable in comparison with the private sector. Also at work is a concern that Federal workers' benefits greatly exceed those of their counterparts in the private sector, as expressed by Oversight Chairman, Rep. James Comer (R-KY) during the Committee's April 30 mark-up session. However, based on my read of the 2024 Congressional Budget Office (CBO) Report cited as evidence by Comer, in terms of *total compensation* (*i.e.*, salary plus benefits), as opposed to benefits only, the differential favoring Feds is only about 5 percent—clearly not great enough to warrant the draconian cuts proposed by the Committee. To read the CBO report and judge for yourself, go to: <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/59970>.

The next stop on the "benefits reduction train" is the House Budget Committee, which is tasked with compiling the various committees' bills (including that of Oversight and Government Reform) into a reconciliation package to be voted on by both the House and Senate. NARFE's strategy at this point, according to John Hatton, VP for Policy and Programs, is to strip these cuts from the package before it

comes up for floor votes. ("Daily Labor Report," *op.cit*). Meanwhile, *your* strategy should be to pay attention to any and all "Advocacy Alerts" at www.NARFE.org, and take action as requested.

2025 VFN Conference Support

Nancy Palmerino

Chapter 7 contributed \$400 in support of the 2025 VFN Conference. The Board would like to thank Sarojini Grigsby, Jim Hall, Claire Jacobsen, Pat Meyers, Nancy Palmerino and Max Scruggs for their generous contributions to help ensure a successful event.

Chapter members also contributed items for the silent auction for Alzheimer's research. We would like to thank Miguella Gutierrez, Mileva Hartman, Claire Jacobsen, Pat Meyers, Nancy Palmerino and Max Scruggs who contributed items for this worthwhile cause. We will report on the total raised as soon as the numbers are available.

Membership Report

Nancy Palmerino

We wish to welcome Patricia Dorn, Javier Inclan and Barbara Miller into the chapter and are sorry to learn of the passing of Harro Wulf. We have 250 Chapter members and an additional 531 National members in our chapter area for a total of 781 Chapter and National members.

June 12 Luncheon Information & Reservation Form

Please join us for fellowship and good food at our annual June luncheon as we welcome Delegate Patrick Hope as our keynote speaker. We will also have our usual raffle for the Alzheimer's Association's research projects. The event will be held on Thursday, June 12, 2025 at the Italian Cafe, 7161 Lee Highway (S. Washington St.), Falls Church, VA. Social hour and cash bar are scheduled for 11:30 a.m. with lunch to follow at 12:00 p.m. The price of the luncheon is \$29.00 and will include salad, choice of entree, bread, non-alcoholic beverage and choice of dessert. Reservations must be received by **Friday, June 6, 2025**. Please select from the following entrees and desserts:

1. Poached Salmon: poached with garlic, lemon, herbs and chardonnay wine, served with roasted potatoes & vegetables.
2. Pasta Primavera: Penne pasta served with portobello mushrooms, Shiitake mushrooms, sun-dried tomatoes and asparagus in chardonnay wine sauce.
3. Chicken Mona Lisa: Chicken breast sauteed with white wine, fresh tomatoes & mushrooms; topped with asparagus and cheese. Served with linguini with butter sauce.
4. Spaghetti with Meat sauce or Marinara Sauce. **Please specify sauce.**
Note: Gluten-free penne pasta is available upon request.

Dessert: Choice of Spumoni Ice Cream or Tiramisu.

To make reservations, please complete the form below and send, along with your check, **payable to "NARFE Chapter 7"** to Pat Meyers, 5912 1st Street S., Arlington, VA 22204. Call Pat at 703-578-3372 if you have questions or special dietary needs/restrictions.

June 2025

June 12, 2025 Luncheon Reservation Form - Please **CIRCLE** your choice of entree and dessert

Name: _____

Entree: 1. Salmon 2. Pasta Primavera 3. Chicken 4. Spaghetti: Meat or Marinara Sauce (specify)

Dessert: 1. Spumoni Ice Cream 2. Tiramisu

Name: _____

Entree: 1. Salmon 2. Pasta Primavera 3. Chicken 4. Spaghetti: Meat or Marinara Sauce (specify)

Dessert: 1. Spumoni Ice Cream 2. Tiramisu

Please send your check for \$29.00 for each luncheon to Pat Meyers, 5912 1st Street S., Arlington, VA 22204. Reservations must be received by June 6, 2025.

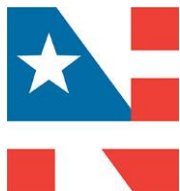
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