

NARFE 101 NEWS

NATIONAL ACTIVE & RETIRED FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

Augusta Chapter 101

NARFE CHAPTER 101, P.O. Box 3993, Augusta, GA 30904-3993

March 2011 Volume 11

Those groundhogs, back on February 2, sure did a great job of predicting an early spring some would say better than Jay Jeffries! The weather has been simply marvelous during February for the folks in the central Savannah River area. It sure beats being up in the snow belt.....brrrrrrrr!

The Georgia Federation Convention will be held this year on May 19 & 20 in Macon. The Executive Board decided to reimburse the \$25 fee of early registration plus \$75 for any Chapter 101 member who attends both days of the Convention. Chapter 101 has fifteen delegate slots allotted. Registration forms are available on the Chapter website, which is listed on the back page of each newsletter. Please call or send me an e-mail if you have a question. We already have nine persons signed up, only six delegate positions left.

Congressman Paul Broun, GA 10th Congressional District, held a town hall meeting at the Evans Library on February 25 that was well attended. Congressman Broun emphasized the budget battle that is going on and his belief that spending must be curtailed. As has been previously stated in this column, these are times of consequence and concern for active and retired Federal Employees. Any pay raise for active Federal Employees is gone for two years and a recent attempt to ban merit-based, step increases, which are small increases awarded to Federal Employees based on the successful performance of their work, was defeated by a vote of 191 to 230.

The attacks on benefits will continue and what is of greater concern is the level of ignorance that exist regarding the federal active and retired employees pay and benefits package. You are likely aware that there are major political battles occurring within Wisconsin, Ohio, Indiana, New Jersey and elsewhere, as legislators confront state unions regarding pay and benefits. As a federal employee, I knew that major differences existed, but I was not aware of how little some states require their employees to pay towards retirement, health care and other benefits. What caused me great concern was hearing commentator Bill O'Reilly on his show "The O'Reilly Factor" confess that he just found out that Federal employees did not have the same collective bargaining privileges as State employees. He was amazed that Federal Employee unions could not bargain on wages or benefits or retirement, but only in regard to personnel matters, such as grievances, working conditions and disciplinary actions. If O'Reilly's staffers had to find this out and tell him the truth about Federal employment, can you imagine what our elected officials are ignorant of regarding your benefits? ****Ralph Angelo, Chapter 101 President



NARFE

National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association



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What a government shutdown would look like

Posted at 6:00 AM ET, 02/25/2011 Excerpted from a report
By Lisa Rein of the *Washington Post*

The **National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association** has created some alarming visuals of what a federal government shutdown might look like if Congress cannot agree by next week's deadline on a spending plan for the current fiscal year.

NARFE's photo set warns of no airport security officers on hand to screen travelers; jammed traffic in a snowstorm, as drivers got no advance warning from the National Weather Service; and veterans hospitals that lack nurses to attend the sick. This, the association says, is what American life would look like without federal employees.



No federal nurses to care for Veterans

NARFE, which has 300,000 members and represents active and retired feds, says it produced the photos to "call attention to what the real possibilities are" for a disruption of government service, said Dan Adcock, the association's legislative director.

"There are some elected officials making the claim that if the government shuts down, no one will notice because it's irrelevant in people's lives," Adcock said. "But people don't remember what happened back [when the federal government shut down] in 1995. People were burning up the Capitol's switchboards to get the government to reopen."

The group warns that, even if the House and Senate do reach a compromise on government spending, other proposals from House Republicans -- to furlough federal workers, reduce compensation and shrink the size of the workforce through attrition -- would weaken the government and lead to similar scenarios.



No TSA officers



No National Weather Service meteorologists

Chapter 101 has 338 dues paying members on the roles but we have phone numbers for only 234 of those members and e-mail addresses for only 99 of the members. Please help to close the gap. Remember **NARFE** is the only organization that exist to protect your earned benefits. **NARFE** has many tools in this effort, with one of the most important being the ability to inform you quickly about what is going on and giving you easy access to the tools needed to forward your concerns to



Why Don't you Drop Me a Line?

Congress. **NARFE** doesn't sell or give e-mail addresses to anyone, so you don't have to worry about getting spam. The process is easy. Log into the www.narfe.org website using your membership number and your last name. Your membership number is on the address label of your **NARFE** magazine. On the left side of the members page, click on "update your record." Then fill in your date of birth and membership number and you will be able to add or change your e-mail or home address and your telephone number. Or, you can simply call **NARFE** at 1-800-456-8410. You need to have your Membership number handy when you call. If you wish, just call the Chapter President or send him an e-mail, and he can get you added to the e-mail list.

In recent years, the Internet has provided a new medium for malcontents to spread fiction as fact to a wide swath of the public through mass-distributed e-mails. These messages have become known as “urban legends” and some were addressed in our last meeting.

Q: “How did Congress attain the right to vote for their own pay raises and how long has this policy been in effect?”

Article I, Section 6 of the Constitution directs Congress to determine its own pay. Historically, Congress has done this by voting for its own pay increases, establishing an independent commission and setting automatic cost-of-living adjustments. By law, Congress may not receive an increase greater than the increase in the base pay of federal government employees whose salaries are governed by the General Schedule. That pay scale governs the compensation of most federal employees. The Federal Employees Pay Comparability Act of 1990 (PL 101-509) requires that covered employees receive an annual basic pay adjustment, including locality-based adjustments.

Congress has to act to prevent a pay raise from taking effect. Thus, the last time members of Congress received a pay increase was in January of 2009, which was the last time that Federal Employees got a pay raise.

Q: “Did Congress raise its own pay for 2010 while voting to deny an increase for Social Security recipients?” “Didn’t Congress raise its pay in 2011?”

No raise: House and Senate members have not voted to **give themselves** raises. Congress voted to freeze its own pay for 2010. There will be no House or Senate raise for 2011 either. Congress passed, and the President signed, H.R. 5146, which eliminates the automatic adjustment in pay for Members of Congress (and Federal Employees) that would have taken place in 2011.

“Urban Legends.”

One recurring “legend,” which is particularly popular is that “Senators & Representatives paid nothing in on any kind of retirement, and neither does any other Federal Employee.”

When Federal Employees and their employing agencies make contributions to the Civil Service Retirement & Disability Fund (CSRDF), such money is deposited in the general fund, and a government security of equal value is created and credited to the CSRDF. These securities are backed by the full faith and credit of the U.S. government and have the same standing as U.S. Savings Bonds. When funds are needed to pay retirement benefits, securities credited to the CSRDF are converted to cash with money from the general fund.

Members of Congress under the old Civil Service Retirement System presently are required to pay 8 percent of total salary (1 percent more of their salaries than General Schedule employees), while those covered by the new Federal Employees Retirement System are required to contribute 1.3 percent (0.5 percent more). This is in addition to the 6.2 percent of the first \$102,000 of salary they all pay to Social Security.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that 97 percent of all medium and large employers in the United States **pay** for their employee retirement pension benefits **without** worker contributions.

Finally, many of the same false claims and arguments being circulated about members of Congress also have been used against Federal Retirees and their health benefits in general. Perpetuation of these false claims undermines **NARFE’s** efforts to preserve our earned compensation. **NARFE** members also should recognize that there are a number of lawmakers—past and present—who are fellow members of **NARFE**.

Retired citizens are constantly being criticized for every conceivable deficiency of the modern world, real or imaginary. We know we take responsibility for all we have done and do not blame others.

HOWEVER, upon reflection, we would like to point out that it was NOT the retired citizens who took:

The melody out of music,
The pride out of appearance,
The courtesy out of driving,
The romance out of love,
The commitment out of marriage,
The responsibility out of parenthood,
The togetherness out of the family,
The learning out of education,
The service out of patriotism,
The Golden Rule from rulers,
The nativity scene out of cities,
The civility out of behavior,
The refinement out of language,
The dedication out of employment,
The prudence out of spending,
The ambition out of achievement or
God out of government and school,

And we certainly are NOT the ones who eliminated patience and tolerance from personal relationships and interactions with others!!

And, we do understand the meaning of patriotism, and remember those who have fought and died for our country.

YES, I'M A RETIRED CITIZEN!

Just look at the Retirees with tears in their eyes and pride in their hearts as they stand at attention with their hand over their hearts!

I'm the life of the party.....
even if it lasts until 8 p.m.

I'm very good at opening childproof caps....
with a hammer.

I'm awake many hours before my body allows me to
get up.

I'm smiling all the time because
I can't hear a thing you're saying.

I'm sure everything I can't find is in a
safe, secure place, somewhere.

I'm wrinkled, saggy, lumpy,
and that's just my left leg.

I'm beginning to realize that aging is not for wimps.

Age is a question of mind over matter.

If you don't mind, it doesn't matter.

Yes, I'm a RETIRED CITIZEN and I think I am
having the time of my life!

**Spread the laughter
Share the cheer
Let's be happy
While we're here.**

**In Response to Call Volume,
OPM Creates New, Toll-Free Tax Hotline**

The Office of Personnel Management has established a new Tax Hotline that retirees can call to change the federal tax withholding on their monthly annuity payments. **The number is 1-800-307-8298.**

Many annuitants and survivors want to change their federal tax withholding and have experienced busy signals and long waits calling the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM's) Retirement Information Office line.

The increased call volume is a result of a change in federal tax withholding in 2011. Most federal annuitants discovered an increase in federal income tax withholding in their monthly annuity payments for 2011 starting with the February 1, 2011, annuity payment. This increased withholding along with increases in premiums for Federal Employees Health Benefits Program insurance premiums resulted in a substantial decrease in their net check. When you do your income tax return this year, look at the amount of money your getting back and decide if you are having the amount you want withheld. You should also review the amount of your State withholding.

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Alzheimer's Report

Louise Shay, Alzheimer's Chairman

This year, NARFE and the Alzheimer's Association celebrated the 25th Anniversary of partnership to support research for Alzheimer's. The research is for cause, treatment and hopefully the cure of this terrible disease. Because of all the contributions that NARFE Chapters have made, four new research grants were selected by the NARFE Alzheimer's National Committee this year. The total dollars for these new research grants was \$560,000. **WOW!!** Information about these grants is in the latest NARFE Magazine.

There is a new way to donate to Alzheimer's Research through their web page. If you go to www.alz.org/NARFE, you can donate online with your credit card. The only thing that I ask is you mark your donation with Chapter Number 101 so we get credit for donations received. If you write a check and donate at our monthly meetings and you WANT the money to go to Research, please put in on the check.

Many people want donations to go to the local Alzheimer's Chapter and that is wonderful as well. Please let me know so that I can send it to the correct location.



Computer classes - A new computer class, **Only the Basics**, will be offered for the first time through Computers @ First, a free ministry of **First Baptist Church in Augusta**.

The class for beginners and seniors teaches the basics -- controlling the mouse, multitasking, copy and paste, and creating files. The class is March 8 and 15 from 1 to 3 p.m. All classes are taught in Room 104 of the Walton Education Building at 3500 Walton Way.

Register by calling (706) 733-2236 or e-mailing wpinaula@fbcaugusta.org.



Sunshine Report

Linda Cratic, Chairperson

Please call if you hear or read of any member who is ill or having an important event occur. We need your input!



"Life is like an onion: You peel it off one layer at a time, and sometimes you weep", Carl Sandburg

Balance on Hand, Last Report: \$3,712.68

Receipts:

<u>Dues Collected</u>	333.26
<u>Advertising</u>	75.00
<u>Misc (meals)</u>	342.50
<u>Total Receipts</u>	750.76
<u>Total to be Accounted For:</u>	\$4,463.44

Disbursements:

<u>Newsletter Printing</u>	135.76
<u>Feb Meeting</u>	316.00
<u>Total Disbursements</u>	451.76

Treasurer's Report

Elaine Bollinger, Treasurer



Balance on Hand for Use: \$4,011.68 Page 5

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We wish to Welcome to Chapter 101
MARISSA JONES-LEWIS & GRACE L.
HOLLINGSWORTH both of Augusta.

At our February Meeting, we greeted Pat Love,
Blake Wood and Cindy Sammons and encour-
age them to join NARFE and Chapter 101.

If you are getting e-mails from Ralph Angelo, the
Chapter President, then we do have your correct
e-mail. If you haven't been receiving e-mails,
than send him yours so that you can be added to
the list of e-mail addresses maintained by the Chapter.

NEW MEMBERS



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LEGISLATIVE

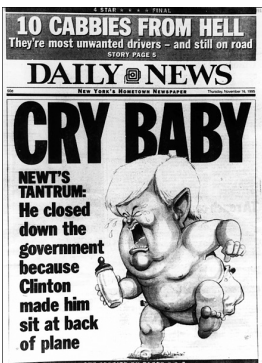
Posted 02/25/2011: Excerpted from a report by the *Washington Post* Editors & Fact Checker Glenn Kessler

"There's a very good possibility that government will shut down. I know the Democrats have their talking points lined up. They'll blame us for everything. What will we do?" --Congressman Allen West (R-Fla.), Feb. 22, 2011

Glenn Kessler reports on the Fact Checker blog that with a March 4 deadline looming on extending a stop-gap spending bill, both Republicans and Democrats are preparing for the possibility of a federal government shutdown. Interestingly, a new poll of political insiders reveals that Republicans overwhelmingly believe that a government shutdown is not in their interest. Democrats, by contrast, believe a government shutdown would benefit their party.

The reason? Clinton's trump card was the veto. Under the Constitution, Congress must muster a two-thirds majority to overcome a presidential veto. So Gingrich had loudly proclaimed that he had a tool to confront the veto: the government shutdown. Gingrich told Time magazine reporters six months before the first shutdown. "Which of the two of us do you think worries more about the government not showing up?"

The Republican Revolution died that day. That was the first mistake the Republicans made: They appeared to be too eager for a confrontation, while Clinton constantly emphasized he was willing to compromise within reason.



Then Gingrich told reporters he stopped funding the government in part because Clinton made him exit from the rear of Air Force One. Take a look at the classic New York Daily News cover from that period as evidence of how the Republicans lost control of their message.

In the end, after weeks of turmoil, the Republicans meekly gave up and eventually cut a deal with Clinton that was not much different than what they could have gotten before the shutdown.

Clinton used the episode as the springboard

Lessons from the great government shutdown of 1995-1996

for his successful reelection campaign, and he humiliated Republicans for it during his 1996 State of the Union speech. "Never, ever, shut the federal government down again," the president scolded.

After that, Clinton never lagged in the polls again. When a balanced-budget agreement was finally reached a couple of years later, it was almost entirely on Clinton's terms. It is remembered as his achievement, not that of the Republicans who had pressed so hard for it.

John Boehner, the current speaker, was the No. 4 Republican in the House leadership during Gingrich's heyday. By many accounts, the experience of living through that shutdown has deeply affected him. Assuming Boehner can maintain control of his caucus that alone makes it less likely that a shutdown will happen this year.

The Bottom Line The U.S. Constitution is designed to promote compromise. If both parties are in control of branches of government, neither side can forever insist on nonnegotiable demands.

In retrospect, Republican lawmakers in 1995 had fallen prey to listening only to their own "echo chamber" and did not understand how their actions were being perceived outside Republican fundraisers and caucus meetings. A more logical course would have been to achieve smaller victories that would have preserved their majority.

Democrats obviously hope that Republicans once again fall into a similar trap of their own making. The House bill cutting \$61 billion from this year's budget has the seeds of such a failure, because there are significant policy choices -- on such issues as family-planning funding and the environment -- that will be difficult to reconcile with the policy agenda of a Democratic-led Senate and White House.

It will be fascinating to see whether this makes them more or less likely to heed the lessons of history.



NARFE, Chapter 101
National Active and Retired
Federal Employees
Ralph Angelo, President
2017 Pheasant Creek Drive
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*You worked hard to earn your
benefits. We're working hard to
preserve them!*

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NARFE 101 NEWS Visit the Chapter 101 Web Site: www.narfe.org/chapter101



NARFE Augusta Chapter 101 March Quarterly Dinner Meeting will be at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, **March 15** at the **Golden Corral Buffet** located at 231 BOBBY JONES EXPRESSWAY, AUGUSTA, GA 30907 (706) 447-3718

The **Guest Speaker** will be Gina Weeks of Washington Commons which is a NARFE affiliated business. She will speak about retirement facilities. Come and join us!

Please pay at the door and plan on arriving about 6 p.m. so that you may have paid and are ready to go through the buffet line after 6 p.m. The speaker will begin after everyone has eaten.

Reservations are required in order to get alert the restaurant regarding the size of the room being reserved.

Make your reservations **no later than March 14** at Noon by calling the Recording Secretary: Tom Kiernan (706) 863-2134 or email: Luke34525@comcast.net

The logo for Golden Corral, featuring the words "golden" and "corral" in a stylized, lowercase font. "golden" is in a light yellow color and "corral" is in a white color, both set against a dark red background.