



**PROTECT** *America's Heartbeat*



## Protect America's Heartbeat 2013 Toolkit

**National Active and Retired Federal  
Employees Association**

**National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association**

[www.NARFE.org](http://www.NARFE.org) | 606 N. Washington Street, Alexandria, VA 22314 | **phone** 703-838-7760 | **fax** 703-838-7785

**Federal Workers Protect America's Heartbeat**



Show your support at [www.PROTECTAmericasHeartbeat.org](http://www.PROTECTAmericasHeartbeat.org)

# Table of Contents

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Talking Points .....</b>  | <b>1</b>  |
| <i>These internal documents provide background information to NARFE Members</i>  |           |
| • General (updated 4/25/2013) .....  | 2         |
| • Benefits At Risk (updated 4/25/2013) .....   | 3         |
| • Private Pay vs. Public Pay (updated 4/25/2013) .....   | 4         |
| • NARFE Analysis of CBO Study on Pay .....   | 6         |
| <b>Fact Sheets .....</b>   | <b>7</b>  |
| <i>These documents should be given to members of Congress and their staff during meetings</i>                                |           |
| • Federal Employees Are Paid Less than Their Private Sector Counterparts (updated 4/25/2013) .....                           | 8         |
| • The Federal Family: Number of Annuitants and Employees by State (updated 6/6/2013).....                                    | 9         |
| • Maps of Where Federal Employees Work and Live .....  | 10        |
| • Fed-Check (added 4/25/2013) .....  | 11        |
| • NARFE’s Legislative Priorities for the 113 <sup>th</sup> Congress (updated 5/30/2013).....                                 | 12        |
| • Current Threats to Retired and Active Federal Workers (updated 5/30/2013) .....  | 13        |
| • Cost-of-Living Adjustments and the Chained CPI (added 4/25/2013) .....   | 16        |
| <b>Advocacy Materials .....</b>  | <b>18</b> |
| <i>These documents guide NARFE members in reaching out to members of Congress and provide templates for advocacy efforts</i> |           |
| • In-State Congressional Visit Guide .....   | 19        |
| • Tips for Conducting Your In-State Congressional Visit .....  | 21        |
| • Sample Meeting Request for In-State Visit .....  | 22        |
| • Inviting Members of Congress to Your Chapter Meeting .....   | 23        |
| • Sample Meeting Request for Chapter Meeting .....   | 25        |
| • Sample Thank You Letter to a Member of Congress .....  | 26        |
| • Calling Your Members of Congress .....   | 27        |
| • Attending Congressional Town Hall Events .....   | 28        |
| • Congressional Outreach at State Conventions .....  | 29        |
| • 2013 Congressional Recess Calendar .....   | 30        |
| • Protect America’s Heartbeat Facebook Advocacy Guide .....  | 31        |
| <b>Media Materials .....</b>   | <b>32</b> |
| <i>These documents guide NARFE members in reaching out to the media and provide templates for media advocacy efforts</i>     |           |
| • How to Write and Submit a Letter to the Editor (LTE) .....   | 33        |
| • Sample Letter to the Editor: We Need Our Federal Employees .....   | 34        |
| • Sample Letter to the Editor: Refute Federal vs. Private Pay Argument .....   | 35        |
| • How to Write and Submit an Op-Ed .....   | 36        |
| • Sample Op-Ed .....   | 37        |

## **Talking Points**

**The documents in this section provide background information to NARFE members and are not to be shared with members of Congress or the public**

## Talking Points: General

### Who are federal employees?

- As proud public servants, it's not in federal employees' nature to brag about the work we do. So it's understandable that many people don't know all that federal employees' do on America's behalf.
- Today, more than 84 percent of federal employees work outside the Washington, DC, metropolitan area.
- According to the 2012 Federal Salary Council (FSC) annual report, federal workers are paid an average of 34.6 percent less than the private sector, an 8.1 percent increase over the prior year's gap.
- Our federal employees ensure that our most basic needs as a society are met – from the safety of the food we eat, to the quality of the air we breathe. Some spend their days thwarting the spread of infectious disease, while others raise the alarm whenever a storm is coming.

### During this deficit crisis, shouldn't federal employees have to make sacrifices, too?

- The need to fix the looming U.S. deficit is serious, which is why, from day one, America's federal employees have answered the calls of their fellow Americans for greater government accountability and restraint in spending.
- Federal employees' are doing our part to help reduce the deficit by saving the nation \$114 billion through the three-year freeze on federal employees' salaries and an increase in retirement contributions.
- Despite this agreed-upon prudence, federal employees have repeatedly become the scapegoat in a political battle over a budget deficit and an economic crisis we did not cause.

### What would happen to America's federal employees if their benefits were reduced?

- **OVERALL BUDGET CUT REPERCUSSIONS:** The federal workforce isn't the only group of Americans who will suffer from unwise budget cuts – the American public at large will feel the cuts as well. The important services that we all rely on for our health, security and progress will likely be impaired because of gaps and limitations in a weakened federal work force.
- **FEDERAL EMPLOYEE BENEFITS' REPERCUSSIONS:** Changes to policies that affect federal employees also threaten the future of the vital services they perform. Without competitive employment packages, our government will struggle to attract the best workers and retain the most knowledgeable employees to serve our country.
- During continued tough economic times, we cannot afford to let our country roll backward. Instead, we must be austere, yet smart to find a new way forward. This way forward will require a strong federal workforce.
- America's federal employees are part of the solution – not the problem.

## Talking Points: Benefits at Risk

### **NARFE is concerned about these proposals:**

As Congress continues to find cost offsets for legislation, we are concerned that these policies will hurt the government's ability to retain and recruit the best and the brightest to government service:

- ***Annuity Contribution***

For all the opposition in Washington to tax hikes, the idea of forcing federal workers to pay an additional percentage of their paychecks into their retirement is essentially a new tax on America's middle-class. As part of the 2012 payroll-tax holiday and unemployment benefits extension deal, federal workers hired on or after January 1, 2013, will pay 2.3 percent more towards retirement. Workers in the private sector who have defined-benefit pensions are not required by employers to contribute toward their retirement. Requiring federal workers to pay more without a corresponding benefit increase is both unfair to us, and, from a good management perspective, could affect recruitment and retention of America's best workers.

- ***High-Five vs. High-Three***

The current law bases a federal employee's retirement on his or her highest three years of salary. If the system is changed to use an employee's highest five years of salary, this will significantly reduce a federal retiree's monthly income. Depending upon whether the retiree is in the older Civil Service Retirement System or the newer Federal Employees Retirement System, this could amount to cuts of \$2,000-\$7,000 over the next five years, and breaks a promise made to these employees when they were hired.

- ***Ending FERS Annuity Supplement***

One-third of a FERS employee's retirement is a Social Security benefit. Under government rules, some employees become eligible for retirement prior to age 62, when they can begin collecting Social Security. The supplement is the additional annuity FERS retirees may receive until they are eligible for the Social Security portion of their retirement benefits. Removing the FERS Supplement would reduce the median FERS annuity from \$720 per month to \$425 per month. This proposal goes against promises made.

- ***Extending the Pay Freeze***

Federal employees have already contributed \$99 billion and counting to deficit reduction through a three-year pay freeze. Extending the pay freeze further widens the gap between federal workers and their counterparts in the private sector, and we will lose our most experienced workers to higher-paying jobs in the private sector.

We are further concerned that as those policies are used for offsets, when Congress turns its focus to deficit reduction, the following benefits that federal employees worked hard to earn and that keep the federal workforce strong will be targeted:

- ***Health Insurance Premiums***

Forcing federal employees, retirees and survivors to pay more and more for health insurance premiums will make health insurance unaffordable for many of us. Under one proposal, employees and retirees would see our premium contribution shift from 30 percent to 43 percent – that's an increase of \$2,850 – by 2020. Retirees are already on a fixed income and cannot stretch their budget to pay for this higher share.

- ***COLAs***

The President's FY 2014 budget proposal recommended changing the current cost-of-living adjustment index to the so-called "Chained CPI." The chained CPI does not factor in real inflation and does not reflect the disproportionately higher health care costs paid by older Americans. This will result in substantially lower COLAs.

## Talking Points: Private vs. Public Pay

### Why do federal employees need these benefits? Aren't they already paid more than their private-sector peers?

- Actually, that's a common misconception.
  - According to the 2012 Federal Salary Council (FSC) annual report, federal employees are paid 34.6 percent less than their private-sector counterparts, based on data collected by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Federal employees accept this pay disparity out of a dedication to country.
  - The FSC calculation is based on Bureau of Labor Statistics data, which is more comprehensive and accurate because it uses a job comparison methodology - measuring data from job matches in the public and private sector. The results show a widening pay gap that needs to be addressed, especially as federal salary rates have been frozen since January 2010 and continue to remain frozen through December 2013, at the earliest.
- A January 2012 report from the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) found that when benefits are weighed, America's most educated and experienced federal workers earn about 23 percent less in total compensation than they would if they worked in the private sector.
  - The report also found that federal workers with less experience and education earned slightly more than their counterparts in the private sector. It is worth noting that it makes sense that the starting salary of an administrative assistant at the CIA, who must undergo a rigorous background check, is slightly higher than that of an administrative assistant at a top law firm.
- The false claim that federal employees are paid more comes from a study by the libertarian Cato Institute.
  - Cato alleges "the average federal civilian worker now earns twice as much in wages and benefits as the average worker in the U.S. private-sector."
  - The study is skewed, outdated and doesn't tell the full story.
    - **SKEWED:** When examining federal employees, the Cato study surveys both salary and retirement benefits. Meanwhile, when examining private-sector jobs, it only surveys salary.
    - **OUTDATED:** The Cato data includes the former Civil Service Retirement System that was used prior to 1987. Retirement payments to former workers obviously don't benefit the majority of current workers, should not be included in their average total compensation and are not similarly accounted for with the private-sector data.

- INCOMPLETE: Unlike the FSC, Cato data glosses over the important differences in occupation, skill level, age and education that determine salaries in both the public and private sectors:
  1. Federal civilian workers are more educated. 44.3 percent of federal employees hold bachelor's degrees, versus just 18.7 percent in the private sector.
  2. The federal government workforce is becoming more professional and educated, and has a higher proportion of white-collar jobs. Today, less than 10 percent of the federal workforce is blue-collar workers. Similarly, 44 percent of the federal workforce consists of professionals and managers, compared to only 32 percent in the private sector.
  3. The average age of employees in the federal workforce is 45, while the average age in the private sector is 40; and
  4. Federal employees have more on-the-job experience than the average private-sector employee, with 60 percent of federal employees having served their nation for more than 15 years.

## **Talking Points: NARFE Analysis of CBO Study “Comparing The Compensation Of Federal And Private-Sector Employees” January 2012**

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) published a study comparing the compensation of federal and private-sector employees based on data from 2005 to 2010. It found that, in some cases, federal employees are paid more than private-sector employees with similar characteristics. By itself, that simple finding can be misleading.

### **Study Does Not Support Across-the-Board Cuts in Pay or Benefits**

The CBO study finds that for the most highly educated individuals, federal workers have salaries that are 23 percent less than, and total compensation that is 18 percent less than, private-sector workers with other similar characteristics. Reducing compensation across-the-board for all federal workers, as is being proposed by some members of Congress, would widen this gap even further. This would harm recruitment and retention of the best and brightest employees that the nation needs.

### **Methodology Ignores Important Facts, Includes Irrelevant Factors for Setting Pay**

While the CBO study controls for occupation, general education and years of work experience, it does not take into account level of job responsibility, specialized training and length of tenure with an employer, all of which employers take into account when determining pay. Federal jobs often involve high levels of responsibility and require specialized training or a high-security clearance. Also, federal employees often make public service a career. On average, today's federal employees have nearly 15 years of service.

Furthermore, the study controls for certain factors, such as age, race and gender, that, legally, are irrelevant for the purposes of determining pay. The study also only uses data through 2010. For the last two years, federal pay scales have been frozen while private-sector wages have increased.

When comparing pay for similar jobs (rather than for individuals with similar characteristics), nonpartisan Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data show that federal jobs pay **34 percent less** than similar private-sector jobs – significantly different than the CBO finding that federal and private-sector workers are paid about the same. Even when including benefits, as CBO does when it finds a 16 percent premium for federal workers' total compensation, BLS data support the conclusion that total compensation for federal jobs is less than similar private-sector jobs.

### **Other Policy Considerations Are Important**

Federal policy should reflect public values, such as rewarding hard work adequately. But if federal compensation were based on the claims of the CBO study, it would mean eliminating basic health benefits and retirement security for the lowest paid employees. It would also mean providing substantial raises and bonuses for the highest paid federal employees, and eliminating the veterans' hiring preference the federal government provides to reward the men and women who served in our military and seek to continue their national service as civilians.

## **Fact Sheets**

**The documents in this section should be given to members of Congress and their staff during meetings**



**PROTECT** *America's Heartbeat*



## Federal Employees Are Paid Less than Their Private Sector Counterparts

A recently released annual report of the Federal Salary Council (FSC) found that federal employees are **paid 34.6% less** than their private-sector counterparts. Federal employees accept this pay disparity in return for service to their country.

The FSC calculation is based on Bureau of Labor Statistics data, which is more comprehensive and accurate because it uses a job comparison methodology - measuring data from job matches in the public and private sector. The results show **a widening pay gap** that needs to be addressed, especially as federal salary rates have been frozen since January 2010 and continue to remain frozen through December 2013, at the earliest, under the current Continuing Resolution.

### ***America's Most Experienced Federal Employees Are the Most Underpaid***

A report from the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) measuring the pay disparity between the federal workforce and the private sector found that when benefits are weighed, America's most educated and **experienced federal workers earn about 18% less** than they would if they worked in the private sector. These are the federal workers we can least afford to lose and should be most concerned about compensating fairly.

The report also found that federal workers with less experience and education earned slightly more than their counterparts in the private sector. NARFE does not dispute these findings, but it is worth noting that it makes sense that the starting salary of an administrative assistant at the CIA, who must undergo a rigorous background check, is slightly higher than that of an administrative assistant at a top law firm.

### ***Politicians Have Falsely Claimed That Federal Employees Are Paid More than Their Private-Sector Counterparts with Imaginary Stats***

Before the CBO report, many politicians cited wild and unfounded claims that federal employees are overpaid. These claims were based on a study from the Cato Institute, a Washington, DC, *libertarian think tank that advocates limited government*. Cato alleges, "the average federal civilian worker now earns twice as much in wages and benefits as the average worker in the U.S. private sector." These **numbers are skewed, outdated and don't tell the full story**.

- **SKEWED:** When examining federal employees, the Cato study surveys both salary and retirement benefits. Meanwhile, when examining private-sector jobs, they only survey salary.
- **OUTDATED:** The data includes the former Civil Service Retirement System that was used prior to 1987. Retirement payments to former workers obviously don't benefit the majority current workers, should not be included in their average total compensation and are not similarly accounted for with the private-sector data.

### ***Federal Employees By the Numbers***

- 84.3% of federal employees work outside the DC metropolitan area – that's 2,392,742 jobs across the country. Only 12.6% of federal employees (356,545) serve inside the D.C. metropolitan area.
- 62% of federal employees earn between \$25,000-75,000 each year.
- Over time, the federal workforce has significantly shrunk compared to the overall U.S. population. In 1969, there were 3 million federal employees serving 203 million Americans. In 2012 there were 2.1 million full-time federal employees serving 307 million Americans.
- 55% of federal employees are between the ages of 45-64 (compared to 36% in the private sector).
- 51% of federal employees have a college degree or higher education (compared to 29% in private sector).
- On average, today's federal employees have 14.6 years of service.
- Nearly 1-in-100 Americans is a federal employee – there are approximately 3.5 million full- and part-time federal employees who go to work every day in every state to support their communities. An additional 2.4 million retired federal and postal employees live across America.



# PROTECT *America's Heartbeat*



## THE FEDERAL FAMILY Civilian Annuitants, Employees & Postal Employees

| State                    | Total Annuitants on Roll * | Monthly Annuities (\$000s) * | Active Federal Employees * | U.S. Postal Service Employees ** | Total Active & Retired Federal & Postal Employees |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Alabama                  | 58,890                     | 140,169                      | 41,744                     | 8,727                            | 109,361   |
| Alaska                   | 7,714                      | 18,510                       | 12,457                     | 1,551                            | 21,722  |
| American Samoa           | 67                         | -                            | 113                        | 107                              | 287   |
| Arizona                  | 54,265                     | 124,765                      | 41,858                     | 9,409                            | 105,532   |
| Arkansas                 | 25,075                     | 50,175                       | 14,475                     | 5,460                            | 45,010  |
| California               | 213,699                    | 500,448                      | 167,514                    | 65,454                           | 446,667   |
| Colorado                 | 49,139                     | 121,528                      | 40,213                     | 10,799                           | 100,151   |
| Connecticut              | 14,741                     | 33,083                       | 8,815                      | 8,485                            | 32,041  |
| Delaware                 | 9,450                      | 25,708                       | 3,360                      | 1,836                            | 14,646  |
| District of Columbia     | 43,776                     | 139,529                      | 163,922                    | 5,439                            | 213,137   |
| Florida                  | 167,381                    | 402,228                      | 90,677                     | 34,032                           | 292,090   |
| Georgia                  | 83,961                     | 194,973                      | 79,209                     | 17,649                           | 180,819   |
| Guam                     | 2,590                      | 4,381                        | 2,897                      | 107                              | 5,594   |
| Hawaii                   | 24,724                     | 61,430                       | 25,575                     | 2,323                            | 52,622  |
| Idaho                    | 14,566                     | 33,538                       | 8,759                      | 2,562                            | 25,887  |
| Illinois                 | 68,691                     | 160,480                      | 49,065                     | 30,489                           | 148,245   |
| Indiana                  | 36,771                     | 79,003                       | 24,527                     | 12,306                           | 73,604  |
| Iowa                     | 20,970                     | 43,665                       | 9,074                      | 7,733                            | 37,777  |
| Kansas                   | 24,647                     | 54,275                       | 17,597                     | 6,988                            | 49,232  |
| Kentucky                 | 35,527                     | 68,269                       | 25,586                     | 7,904                            | 69,017  |
| Louisiana                | 26,982                     | 58,377                       | 21,335                     | 7,866                            | 56,183  |
| Maine                    | 13,956                     | 29,365                       | 10,869                     | 3,486                            | 28,311  |
| Maryland                 | 158,094                    | 522,100                      | 136,148                    | 13,008                           | 307,250   |
| Massachusetts            | 42,848                     | 96,523                       | 28,887                     | 16,836                           | 88,571  |
| Michigan                 | 44,006                     | 99,293                       | 30,263                     | 21,625                           | 95,894  |
| Minnesota                | 28,781                     | 62,834                       | 18,174                     | 12,715                           | 59,670  |
| Mississippi              | 25,496                     | 54,381                       | 19,308                     | 4,863                            | 49,667  |
| Missouri                 | 54,249                     | 120,946                      | 37,062                     | 15,374                           | 106,685   |
| Montana                  | 12,852                     | 29,999                       | 10,249                     | 2,152                            | 25,253  |
| Nebraska                 | 13,444                     | 28,163                       | 11,030                     | 4,615                            | 29,089  |
| Nevada                   | 22,491                     | 53,720                       | 12,384                     | 4,210                            | 39,085  |
| New Hampshire            | 12,316                     | 29,018                       | 4,656                      | 3,168                            | 20,140  |
| New Jersey               | 54,575                     | 137,476                      | 26,305                     | 22,390                           | 103,270   |
| New Mexico               | 27,941                     | 65,340                       | 25,720                     | 3,138                            | 56,799  |
| New York                 | 95,411                     | 203,392                      | 67,517                     | 45,030                           | 207,958   |
| North Carolina           | 73,591                     | 173,865                      | 45,270                     | 18,274                           | 137,135   |
| North Dakota             | 6,430                      | 13,017                       | 6,375                      | 1,857                            | 14,662  |
| Northern Mariana Islands | 22                         | -                            | 200                        | 10                               | 232   |
| Ohio                     | 75,036                     | 177,889                      | 52,312                     | 23,936                           | 151,284   |
| Oklahoma                 | 48,255                     | 103,142                      | 39,218                     | 6,882                            | 94,355  |
| Oregon                   | 33,351                     | 79,234                       | 20,098                     | 6,775                            | 60,224  |
| Pennsylvania             | 108,305                    | 244,492                      | 67,019                     | 29,553                           | 204,877   |
| Puerto Rico              | 11,388                     | 20,114                       | 11,004                     | 2,570                            | 24,962  |
| Rhode Island             | 8,240                      | 17,807                       | 7,377                      | 2,591                            | 18,208  |
| South Carolina           | 43,747                     | 97,206                       | 22,679                     | 7,373                            | 73,799  |
| South Dakota             | 10,253                     | 21,664                       | 8,697                      | 2,155                            | 21,105  |
| Tennessee                | 46,310                     | 103,564                      | 28,711                     | 12,133                           | 87,154  |
| Texas                    | 168,519                    | 379,070                      | 142,708                    | 40,777                           | 352,004   |
| US Virgin Islands        | 644                        | 1,003                        | 703                        | 185                              | 1,532   |
| Utah                     | 34,937                     | 80,813                       | 28,342                     | 4,695                            | 67,974  |
| Vermont                  | 4,439                      | 9,823                        | 4,754                      | 1,706                            | 10,899  |
| Virginia                 | 142,228                    | 439,306                      | 149,591                    | 16,464                           | 308,283   |
| Washington               | 66,021                     | 159,252                      | 57,473                     | 11,876                           | 135,370   |
| West Virginia            | 17,868                     | 41,112                       | 16,205                     | 3,934                            | 38,007  |
| Wisconsin                | 26,971                     | 56,516                       | 16,090                     | 12,037                           | 55,098  |
| Wyoming                  | 5,734                      | 12,718                       | 5,811                      | 1,111                            | 12,656  |
| <b>TOTAL</b>             | <b>2,522,375</b>           | <b>6,078,691</b>             | <b>2,017,981</b>           | <b>626,730</b>                   | <b>5,167,086</b>                                  |

\*Office of Personnel Management (OPM), Dec. 2012

\*\*Postal Regulatory Commission, Nov. 2012

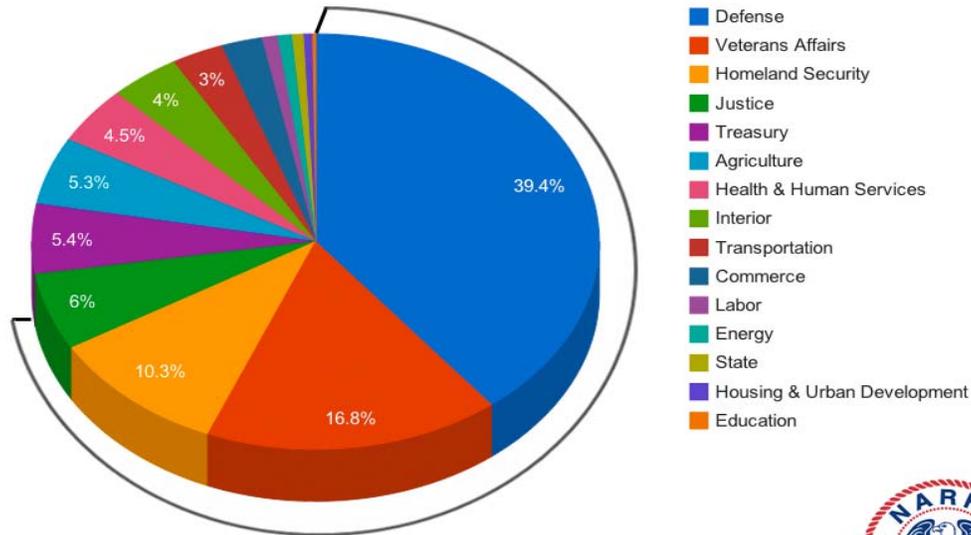


**PROTECT** *America's Heartbeat*



## Where do America's Federal Employees Work?

Source: U.S. Office of Personnel Management, 2013

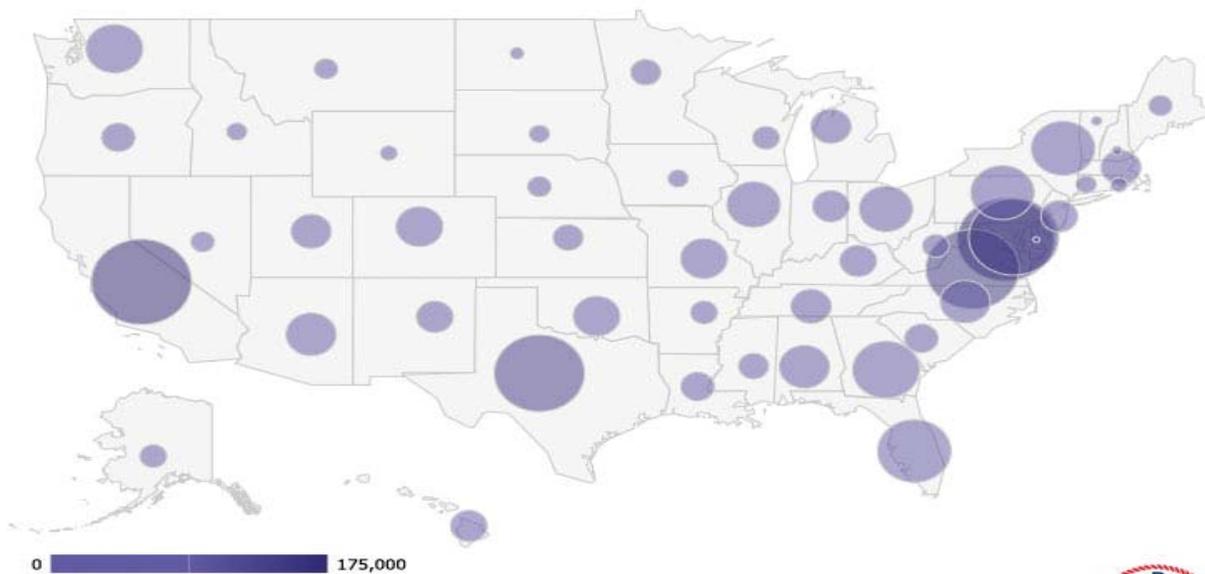


About 3-in-4 American federal workers protect our nation's Defense, Veterans, and Security.



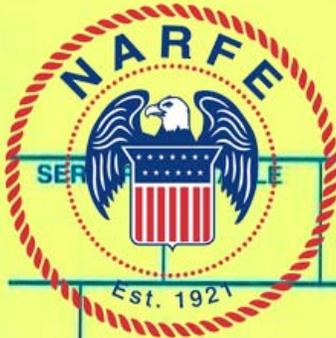
## Where Do America's Federal Employees Live?

(Source: U.S. Office of Personnel Management, Sept 2012)



85 percent of our nation's federal employees work for America outside the DC-metropolitan area.





# Fed-Check

| SER | GUESTS      | CHECK NUMBER    |
|-----|-------------|-----------------|
|     | 4.6 million | feds & retirees |

## Already in effect:

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| 2011 + 2012 + 2013 pay freeze            | \$99B |
| Increased new-hire pension contributions | \$15B |

## White House 2014 Budget

|   |        |
|---|--------|
| Increased (+1.2%) pension contributions for all | \$20B  |
| Reduced 2014 pay raise                          | \$18B  |
| Chained CPI formula for fed retirement benefits | ~\$15B |

Thank You

TOTAL

**\$167 billion**



**PROTECT** *America's Heartbeat*



## **NARFE's Legislative Priorities for the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress**

*The National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association (NARFE), one of America's oldest and largest associations, was founded in 1921 with the mission of protecting the earned rights and benefits of America's active and retired federal workers. The largest federal employee/retiree organization with 260,000 members, NARFE represents the retirement interests of nearly five million current and future federal annuitants, spouses and survivors.*

### **1) Prevent reductions in the earned benefits of federal employees and retirees**

- Oppose reductions in cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) to federal retirement annuities and Social Security benefits, including a switch to the chained CPI for purposes of calculating COLAs.
- Oppose attempts to shift more of the costs of health insurance onto federal employees and retirees.

### **2) Prevent across-the-board cuts to the size of the federal workforce, federal pay, and federal retirement and health benefits**

- Oppose increased retirement contributions for federal employees (for both current employees and future hires) without any enhancement of benefits. Oppose reduction or elimination of federal retirement annuities.
- Oppose an extension of the federal pay freeze, and support full implementation of federal employee pay parity as reflected in the Federal Employees Pay Comparability Act of 1990 (P.L. 101-509).
- Oppose arbitrary reductions in the size of the federal workforce through attrition, or work hours through furloughs. Support full back-pay for furloughed employees.

### **3) Support improvements to the affordability of and choice provided by the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHBP)**

- Assess Administration proposals, including: the inclusion of a self plus one option; expansion of plan types offered, including regional preferred provider organizations (PPOs); coverage for domestic partners; and, implementation of wellness programs.
- Support efforts to reduce the cost of prescription drug coverage.

### **4) Oppose other cuts to federal employee and retiree benefits. Assess and support proposals that improve the efficiency and quality of the federal workforce without targeting federal employee pay and benefits**

- Oppose unfair reductions in federal workers' compensation benefits at retirement age without taking into account recipients' disadvantages in preparing for retirement. Support improvements to the program integrity of the federal workers' compensation program.
- Assess and support miscellaneous civil service reforms that improve federal workforce quality and efficiency without targeting federal employees, e.g. hiring reform.

*For more information, please contact Jessica Klement, Legislative Director, at [jklement@narfe.org](mailto:jklement@narfe.org), or John Hatton, Deputy Legislative Director, at [jhatton@narfe.org](mailto:jhatton@narfe.org).*



| Threat  | Proposal Summary   | Consequences  |
|---|--|---|
| <p><b>Reduced COLAs for Federal Annuities</b></p>               | <p>The President's FY14 budget proposes changing how inflation is calculated for purposes of determining cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) to federal retirement annuities and Social Security benefits by switching from the CPI-W to the chained CPI. The change would result in lower COLAs. The proposal is expected to receive serious consideration in budget negotiations between the White House and congressional Republicans</p>  | <p><b>Lowers annuities by estimated 0.3 percent per year; 3 percent after 10 years; 6.2 percent after 20 years; 9.4 percent after 30 years.</b> For the median CSRS annuity of \$31,440 per year, this amounts to a loss of \$6,155 after 10 years; \$28,531 after 20 years; and, \$77,013 after 30 years; it would have the same percentage impact on Social Security benefits. The chained CPI does not accurately reflect seniors' largest expense – medical care – and any attempt to change the COLA formula must do so.</p> |
| <p><b>Increase in Employee Contributions for Retirement</b></p> | <p><b>Federal workers hired after December 31, 2012, will pay 2.3% more of each paycheck</b> toward their retirement, even though they will not be receiving any additional benefits. Passed as part of the payroll-tax holiday and unemployed benefits extension deal. <b>ENACTED (P.L. 112-96).</b></p> <p><b>Increase in retirement contributions for current employees.</b> Passed the House twice during the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress and included in House budget for FY14.</p> <p><b>1.2% increase in retirement contributions for current employees.</b> Proposed in President's Budget for FY14.</p> | <p><b>\$15 billion</b> – the cost to new federal workers (and savings to U.S. government) over the next 10 years.</p> <p><b>Upwards of \$83 billion</b> – the cost to federal workers (and savings to US government) over 10 years, depending on the size of the increase.</p> <p><b>\$20 billion</b> – estimated cost to federal workers (and savings to US government) over 10 years.</p>   |
| <p><b>Pay Freeze</b></p>  | <p><b>Three-year pay freeze on federal workers.</b> No pay raises in 2011, 2012, or 2013. <b>ENACTED (P.L. 111-322 and P.L. 113-06).</b></p>   | <p><b>\$99 billion</b> – the cost to federal workers (and savings to US government) over 10 years from three years of the pay freeze.</p>   |
| <p><b>Furloughs</b></p>   | <p><b>Across-the-board government spending cuts pursuant to sequestration will force agencies to use administrative furloughs.</b></p> <p>A few agencies that have announced furloughs include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IRS: 5 furlough days where the IRS will shut down entirely on May 24, June 14, July 5, July 22 and August 30, 2013</li> <li>• HUD: 7 furlough days where HUD will shut down entirely between May and August 2013</li> <li>• DOD: most employees will be furloughed for 11 days starting July 8</li> </ul>   | <p><b>Adequacy of government operations and services threatened; significant negative economic impact.</b> Potential loss of up to 22 days of pay for federal employees for administrative furloughs.</p>   |



| Threat  | Proposal Summary  | Consequences  |
|---|---|---|
| <p><b>Increased FEHBP premiums; program integrity threats</b></p> | <p>The Simpson-Bowles Fiscal Commission proposed limiting the government's payment for FEHBP premiums to a lump-sum amount that is indexed to GDP, plus one percent. Proposal forces federal employees, retirees and survivors to pay an increasingly higher share of their health insurance premiums. Currently, the government pays a set percentage – 72 percent on average – of total premiums. Because health care inflation has been outpacing the growth in GDP, the proposal would cause enrollees to pay a greater percentage of FEHBP premiums.</p> <p><b>Removing postal employees and retirees from FEHBP, replacing health insurance with a USPS-administered plan.</b> Proposed by USPS Postmaster General.</p> <p><b>Removing employees from FEHBP</b> and placing them in the state exchanges created under the Affordable Care Act (H.R. 1780 in 113<sup>th</sup> Congress).</p> <p><b>Separating Medicare-eligible or Medicare-enrolled postal employees and retirees into a separate FEHBP plan.</b> Included in different versions of S. 1789 (112<sup>th</sup> Congress), the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Postal Service Act of 2012, but ultimately struck from the legislation that passed the Senate last year.</p> | <p><b>Estimated increase in the enrollees' share of premiums from 28 percent on-average to 43 percent on average after 10 years.</b></p> <p><b>Reduction of guaranteed health benefits for current and future postal employees. Threat of higher costs for postal employees and retirees as well as other federal employees and annuitants by undermining the integrity of FEHBP.</b> Notably, it would split the FEHBP risk pool, decreasing the purchasing power for both a USPS-run plan and FEHBP. It would also duplicate administrative costs already incurred by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) in its administration of FEHBP.</p> <p><b>Reduces participant choice of health plans. May increase the cost of FEHBP premiums for federal employees and retirees across-the-board.</b></p> <p>Under the guise of, "if it's good enough for members of Congress, it's good enough for the President and the Executive Branch," <b>the bill completely dismantles FEHBP</b> as it exists today. Employees would not receive FEHBP in retirement if H.R. 1780 was enacted. FEHBP would consist of only current retirees, and eventually cease to exist.</p> |
| <p><b>Reductions to value of FERS annuities</b></p>               | <p><b>Proposals to change the accrual rate from 1 percent to 0.7 percent and base annuities on the highest five instead of the highest three years of salary would reduce annuities by over 40 percent.</b> Approved by House OGR Committee during the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress – H.R. 3813.</p> <p><b>Eliminates the FERS Annuity Supplement for new hires.</b> Passed the House during the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress – H.R. 6684. Proposed in President's Budget for FY14. Previous proposals would eliminate for all employees.</p>   | <p><b>Undermines retirement income security</b> Current median FERS annuity is \$756 per month. New median annuity would be \$446 per month.</p> <p><b>Undermines retirement income security.</b> Proposals that would eliminate the annuity supplement for current employees would unfairly take away a retirement benefit employees rely on in retirement planning.</p>   |



| Threat  | Proposal Summary   | Consequences   |
|---|--|--|
| <p><b>Workforce Reduction</b></p>                         | <p><b>Mandatory reduction in Department of Defense civilian workforce, projected to be 5 percent.</b><br/><b>ENACTED (P.L. 112-239).</b></p> <p><b>Mandatory 10 percent reduction in federal workforce through attrition.</b> Policy assumption underlying House-passed FY1 budget – H.Con.Res. 112. Proposals along the same line have been discussed as a way to offset sequestration.</p>   | <p><b>Weakens America's defenses by diminishing the civilian support provided to our troops.</b></p> <p><b>A weaker federal workforce is a weakened America</b><br/>Today's federal workforce is already stretched thin – there are nearly the same number of federal employees in 2013 as there were in 1946 when Truman was president and the U.S. population was half the size.</p>   |
| <p><b>Reduction of Workers' Compensation Benefits</b></p> | <p><b>Reduces FECA's basic compensation benefit by 25 percent at retirement age, and eliminates the supplemental for disabled workers with dependents.</b> The Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA) provides basic compensation to federal employees disabled by work-related injuries and illnesses. In exchange for their reasonable benefits, FECA recipients lose their right to sue the government for their work-caused impairment. While compensation is modest, it will never be able to reverse the permanent damage from a debilitating injury or illness. Legislation including these benefit cuts passed the Senate in April 2012 – S. 1789 (postal reform legislation).</p> | <p><b>Federal employees disabled by a work-caused injury or illness would not be afforded the level of income security they deserve and would have earned had they been able to continue working.</b> According to a GAO report (GAO-13-108) released in October 2012, federal workers disabled as part of their service would receive up to 35 percent less in retirement age income than if they were not injured and retired after 30 years under the current retirement system. Under current law, median FECA benefits for totally disabled workers are "on par with or less than" what they would have received after a full 30-year career. Additionally, S. 1789 would have reduced, by 11 percent, the pre-retirement wage-loss compensation of injured workers with dependents, even as the GAO report shows that the median after-tax replacement rate of income is only 81.6 percent. Finally, GAO found that these policy changes would have a disproportionate impact on the lowest-wage employees and those who are injured early in their careers.</p> |



## **Cost-of-Living Adjustments and the Chained CPI**

*Cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) to federal civilian and military retirement annuities, as well as Social Security benefits, veterans' benefits and disability benefits, currently are determined by the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W), which is computed by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) at the Department of Labor (DOL).*

*The President's Budget for Fiscal Year 2014 included a proposal to use the Chained Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (Chained CPI-U) instead of the CPI-W as a way to limit the growth of the national debt. The proposal was also included in the Republican Study Committee budget, which received the support of 104 Republican members of the House of Representatives. Previously, the proposal was part of the Simpson-Bowles Fiscal Commission report and has received serious consideration in budget negotiations between the White House and congressional Republicans.*

### **Chained CPI Cuts Earned, Promised Benefits**

Individuals who have worked their whole lives to earn their retirement benefits will receive less money in the future, and that sounds like a real benefit cut to them, because it is.

Using the chained CPI instead of the CPI-W would reduce COLAs by an estimated 0.3 percent per year. Because this difference would compound over time, it would result in estimated yearly benefits 3 percent lower after 10 years, 6.2 percent lower after 20 years and 9.4 percent lower after 30 years.

Federal retirees under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS), which does not provide Social Security benefits, often rely on their federal annuity as their sole source of income. Therefore, a switch to the chained CPI would have a particularly acute impact on their retirement benefits. The median CSRS annuity is \$31,440 per year. By using the chained CPI, someone earning that annuity would receive, in total actual dollars, an estimated:

- \$6,155 less after 10 years;
- \$28,531 less after 20 years;
- \$77,013 less after 30 years; and, if lucky enough to enjoy a long life,
- \$166,200 less after 40 years.

Federal employees covered by the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) would be hit twice by the switch, through their federal pensions and their Social Security benefit. Additionally, FERS does not even provide full inflation protection if inflation is greater than 2 percent. With a median annuity of \$9,876 per year, FERS retirees also would receive an estimated:

- \$1,933 less after 10 years;
- \$8,962 less after 20 years;
- \$24,191 less after 30 years; and, if lucky enough to enjoy a long life,
- \$52,207 less after 40 years.

### **Chained CPI is Not a Better Measure of Inflation**

Proponents of the chained CPI claim it provides a better measure of inflation by taking into account how consumers substitute one item when the price of another item increases; for example, by switching from steak to chicken when the price of steak rises. Accounting for this type of substitution, however, fails to measure lower standards of living that result from



substituting a less desirable alternative. Seniors, in particular, as a result of living on a fixed income, often find such substitution impracticable, as they are already purchasing lower priced goods.

Second, neither the chained CPI nor the CPI-W accurately reflects changes in consumer prices experienced by the seniors who rely on the measures to adjust their incomes appropriately. Notably, while health care accounts for about 12 percent of spending for those 62 or older, it accounts for only 5 percent of spending for the general population. Meanwhile, health care costs are rising faster than other goods – last year, health care inflation was 3.7 percent while the CPI-W indicated the average price of consumer goods increased 1.7 percent.

When you measure costs experienced by Americans 62 years of age or older, as the BLS does when calculating an experimental price index for elderly consumers, the CPI-E, inflation is actually greater than the CPI-W reflects, a clear sign that switching to the chained CPI is a move in the wrong direction.

### **Chained CPI Hurts the Most Vulnerable**

Using the chained CPI as an inflation measure would decrease benefits for low income seniors and the disabled, including disabled veterans, while simultaneously increasing taxes on lower and middle-income taxpayers. Current seniors, especially those who are older than 65, will be hit the hardest by a switch to the chained CPI – they are likely to have fewer sources of income, are unable to return to work given their age, and have higher medical expenses.

The average Social Security benefit is roughly \$15,000 annually, which is, by itself, a low income. For seniors that rely solely on their Social Security benefits, every dollar the chained CPI reduces their income may be a vital one. While some proponents of the chained CPI have coupled their support for it with an increase in benefits for the poorest elderly, such as those receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI), it is difficult to see how you save money for deficit reduction without hurting low income seniors when the average Social Security benefit is so low.

Individuals receiving veterans' benefits or disability benefits (SSI) will be hit particularly hard by a switch to the chained CPI. Because many of these individuals rely on benefits for a longer period of time, the compounding effect from reduced COLAs caused by a switch to the chained CPI will take a more substantial toll on their total benefits.

Finally, using the chained CPI to adjust tax brackets would increase taxes on lower and middle-income workers, making it harder to save more for retirement. According to a Joint Committee on Taxation report, by 2021, the tax liability for those with incomes between \$10,000 and \$20,000 would increase by 14.5 percent, and by 3.5 percent for incomes between \$20,000 and \$30,000, while those with incomes of \$1 million and above would see an increase of only 0.1 percent. The chained CPI hits our nation's most vulnerable twice.

The impact of these combined changes would fall hardest on those who live the longest, as their savings dwindle, and on those whose sole source of retirement income is from their government benefit, including Social Security and civilian and military retirement annuities.

## **Advocacy Materials**

**The documents in this section are to guide NARFE members in reaching out to members of Congress and provide templates for advocacy efforts**

## In-State Congressional Visit Guide

*One of the most effective ways to influence the policy-making process and build a relationship with your legislator is to visit their local office in person.*

### Asking for the Meeting

*Timeline: 3 - 6 weeks before you intend to have the meeting*

The first thing you should do is send a meeting request to the member of Congress' scheduler. You may make this request by email or fax using the below sample meeting request (so that it is in writing), and then follow up the initial request shortly thereafter with a phone call, since schedules may be tight. Many congressional offices now also make it possible to request a meeting on their website.

#### TIPS:

- Suggest specific times and dates for the meeting.
- Let them know you'd like to discuss issues around federal budget cuts relating to active and retired federal employees.
- If the lawmaker is unavailable to meet with you, ask for a meeting with the staffer responsible for budget or federal workforce issues, or the district director.
- Be respectful, but be persistent! Make sure to follow up with the office if they don't get back to you. If they tell you they have no availability, call back in a couple of days and ask if there have been any cancellations.

### Preparing for Your Meeting

*Timeline: 1 - 2 weeks before the meeting*

#### Step #1: Where Do They Stand?

The first thing you'll want to do when preparing for a meeting with your legislator or his or her staff is to find out where they stand on NARFE's legislative priorities. You can find this information by exploring their website or NARFE's Legislative Action Center. NARFE legislative staff can also assist you.

#### Step #2: Print Your Talking Points and Handouts

Once you're familiar with your legislator and where current legislative proposals stand, the next item on your agenda should be to begin to assemble the materials you will need for your visit.

**Talking points** are what you will use to educate **yourself** to effectively communicate with your representative or senator.

**Fact Sheets** are the written information that you will provide to the **member or their staff** as a leave-behind.

### IF ATTENDING THE MEETING WITH OTHERS

#### Step #3: Recruiting Attendees

Your legislator's time is valuable, so you'll want to maximize your efforts by inviting others to attend your meeting with you. You should aim to have no more than six people at the meeting for the most effective outcome. These can be NARFE members, active or retired non-NARFE members, community leaders or members of a federal employees' union. If

your representative's district includes several NARFE chapters, you may want to work with all of the chapters to send a representative.

If you don't have an entourage, that's OK as well. One-on-one meetings are still extremely helpful!

#### **Step #4: Conduct an Attendees Training**

One of the most important pre-meeting activities you will conduct is assembling your team to plan out how the meeting is going to proceed.

- **Prioritize** - With input from your team members, you should decide in what order you are going to present the current proposal and who will play the lead role in the discussion. This is very important, as you never know how long a meeting is going to last; some meetings last 30 minutes or more, while others last for only five.
- **Delegate** - You should plan on assigning roles for each member of your group. One person should be the lead facilitator, while others speak to specific pieces of legislation. This is a good place to highlight a personal story. You should also make sure that one person takes good notes during the meeting for future reference.
- **Review** - You should use this opportunity to review the materials you'll be giving your legislator and to discuss the talking points NARFE provides. This will go a long way in making sure that your group members are knowledgeable and consistent during the actual meeting.

#### **Confirm Your Meeting**

*Timeline: 2 days before meeting*

This step may be a no-brainer, but it is critical. Make sure you confirm your meeting with your legislator's scheduler a couple of days before the meeting is to occur. You may also use this opportunity to schedule a follow-up meeting or conversation with staff to inquire about additional information needed and to see if the member or staff has any feedback from your in-district visit.

#### **Following Your Meeting**

*Timeline: No later than a week following meeting*

##### **Step #1: Send a Thank You**

Following your meeting, send the member of Congress and staff a thank-you note for the meeting. If you promised follow-up information, this is a prime opportunity to send it. If the member agreed to take action on legislation, politely remind them or thank them again for taking action.

##### **Step #2: Tell Headquarters About Your Meeting**

Login to the Legislative Action Center at [www.capwiz.com/narfe/lrm/feedback.tt](http://www.capwiz.com/narfe/lrm/feedback.tt) or email [advocacyinaction@narfe.org](mailto:advocacyinaction@narfe.org) to tell headquarters about your meeting. This information is important in our continued communications with members of Congress.

## Tips for Conducting Your In-State Congressional Visit

- **Acknowledge Support** - Take a moment to acknowledge the member's current support for any legislation he or she is already cosponsoring or any past support he or she has given. A thank you goes a long way.
- **Establish a connection** - Mention a current event you have a shared interest in, or praise a recent vote the legislator cast you can agree on. "I was glad to see the way you cast your vote on the earned health and retirement benefits issue," is the sort of statement that will let an elected official know you are engaged in federal politics and care deeply about a variety of topics.
- **Grassroots Support** - You should let those you are meeting with know what you and your fellow NARFE members are doing to be active in your area. Be specific and provide them with examples, such as letters to the editor that were printed, etc.
- **Paint the big picture and the small picture** - For example, one person could tell his or her story about how the proposed cuts could affect her/him personally (the small picture); then someone else could flesh out current statistics and impact in the United States and your state.
- **Tell Your Story** - The most effective method of communicating the importance of this legislation is to tell your personal story or the story of someone close to you. We have seen time and time again that personal stories change minds, and this is your chance to sell the current proposal.
- **Make specific, clear requests and ask for an answer** - Often, the main reason groups have unsatisfactory meetings is that their requests were not clear and specific enough. Your elected officials need to know what you want them to do (what bill you want them to cosponsor, how you want them to vote). However, in addition to the specific requests you bring, don't be afraid to ask the legislator what else they think they could do on your issue (whether they say yes or no to your original request).
- **Don't be afraid to say "I don't know"** - During your visit, you may encounter a question that you cannot answer. Fear not! It's okay to admit you don't know the answer. You can simply research the issue, or ask someone with NARFE to do so, and then get back to the legislator's office with the information requested. Whatever you do, never pretend you know something if you do not. Legislators will appreciate honesty, your willingness to find an answer to their questions and your commitment to the issue at hand.
- **Be Assertive** - During your meeting, it will be important to be assertive, but not aggressive. Your main goal is to convince the legislator to follow through on your request.

## Sample Meeting Request for In-State Visit

Date

The Honorable [Insert your Representative or Senator's first and last names]  
Attn: Scheduler  
[Insert the district office address]  
[Insert the office city, state and ZIP Code]

Dear [Representative [OR] Senator] [Insert your Representative or Senator's last name],

I am writing to request a meeting with you at your district office in [Insert the name of the city where you'd like to meet]. I would like to discuss pending legislation affecting active and retired federal workers.

As a member of the National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association (NARFE), I am concerned about proposed cuts in the upcoming budget negotiations that unfairly target current and retired federal workers. Among the top issues affecting retirees like me are cuts to our earned benefits and annuities. Budget cuts to either of these will have a tremendous impact on me, my family and my community.

I will follow up in the next few days with a phone call to schedule this meeting. If you have questions, please feel free to contact me at [Insert your phone number or e-mail address].

Sincerely,

[Insert your first and last name]  
[Insert your address]  
[Insert your city, state and ZIP code]

## Inviting Members of Congress to Your Chapter Meeting

*During recess periods, members of Congress will be in their home states to hold events, meet with constituents and work out of their local offices. It is during this time that NARFE members will have an extraordinary opportunity to reach out to their legislators and educate them about federal retiree and workforce issues.*

*A special chapter meeting is a great way to introduce legislators and/or their staff to NARFE members and educate them about our issues. Below are some tips on how to orchestrate a memorable visit.*

### Tips for Hosting a Legislator

*Time Frame: The length of a recess can vary from a week to over a month. Consult the 2013 Congressional Recess Calendar on page 27 for exact dates.*

The event is simple: Work with other chapter presidents in your area to hold a joint chapter event and invite your representative, senators or their staff to attend.

It's as easy as 1-2-3:

1. Pick a date and location and submit official scheduling requests using the sample chapter meeting request on page 22 to the main district office of your legislator. Effective scheduling is the most important aspect of your event. You can fax it and/or email it to the office scheduler. Be sure to call to follow up.
2. You can also invite multiple congressional offices to attend your chapter meeting for a Q&A forum to hear each office's different positions on the issues. Make sure to set aside some time for a meet-and-greet so individual NARFE members can meet the guests.
3. If only one member of Congress or their staff attends, set aside time for them to speak and answer questions as well as a meet-and-greet with the NARFE members in attendance.

### Run of Show for Your Chapter Meeting

#### NARFE Members Arrive

- NARFE members from invited chapters arrive, mingle briefly and take their seats.
- Chapter president moves to front of the room and introduces the event.

#### Introductions

- Chapter president gives brief introduction about the issues impacting NARFE members (referring to the Toolkit fact sheets).
- Chapter president introduces the panel guests (if multiple congressional offices sent representatives) or the single speaker (if only one).
- Chapter president describes the format of the event: [Speaker(s) introduce themselves and talk about issues. NARFE members then ask questions of the speaker(s) who answer in turn.]

### The Speaker

- Chapter president introduces each speaker and gives them several minutes for an introductory statement.
- After all introductions are complete, NARFE members are invited to raise their hands to ask questions. Each speaker takes turns answering the questions.
- After all questions are asked or the allotted time of the event nears its end, the chapter president asks each speaker to conclude with a few thoughts.
- It might help to have a moderator for the meeting.

### Meet-and-Greet

- Chapter president thanks the speaker(s) and opens up the event for individual NARFE members to meet and speak with them.

## **Following Your Meeting**

*Timeline: No later than a week following meeting*

### **Send a Thank You**

Following your chapter meeting, send the member of Congress and staff a thank-you note for the meeting. If you promised follow-up information, this is a prime opportunity to send it. If the member agreed to take action on legislation, politely remind them or thank them again for taking action.

### **Tell Headquarters About Your Meeting**

Login to the Legislative Action Center at [www.capwiz.com/narfe/lrm/feedback.tt](http://www.capwiz.com/narfe/lrm/feedback.tt) or email [advocacyinaction@narfe.org](mailto:advocacyinaction@narfe.org) to tell headquarters about your meeting. This information is important in our continued communications with members of Congress.

## Sample Meeting Request for Chapter Meeting

Date

The Honorable [Insert your Representative or Senator's first and last names]

Attn: Scheduler

[Insert the district office address]

[Insert the city, state and ZIP Code]

Dear [Representative [OR] Senator Insert your Representative or Senator's last name],

I am writing to invite you to attend a chapter meeting of the National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association to discuss issues important to active and retired federal employees. The meeting will be held on [Insert date] at [Insert location of meeting]. We will discuss issues and legislation affecting active and retired federal workers. Members from several local chapters and statewide officers will be in attendance.

I will follow up in the next few days with a phone call. If you have questions, please feel free to contact me at [Insert your phone number or email address].

Sincerely,

[Insert your first and last name]

[Insert your address]

[Insert your city, state and ZIP code]

## Sample Thank You Letter to a Member of Congress



### MISSOURI FEDERATION NATIONAL ACTIVE & RETIRED FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

May 12, 2011

The Honorable Claire McCaskill  
915 E. Ash St.  
Columbia, MO 65201

Dear Senator McCaskill,

Thank you for making Allison Skare of your staff available to visit with us on May 10. We appreciate the time given to us and the cordial exchange we had with her.

NARFE members from our chapters in Columbia, Hannibal and Jefferson City participated in the visit and we provided signed letters from 27 of our members from the central Missouri and Kansas City areas. These letters expressed the deep concerns of NARFE over the issues of earned benefits of federal employees and retirees and the prospects for future federal employees.

We understand our country's budget and deficit problems and are already making sacrifices to assist in their resolution. However, we feel it is unfair to continually single out and scapegoat federal employees and retirees in addressing these issues.

We sincerely hope you will support our concerns as you work to address our nation's budget and deficit problems.

Sincerely,

[Name]  
Missouri Federation State Legislative Liaison Officer  
2432 Country Club Dr.  
Jefferson City, MO 65109  
[Telephone and Fax]  
[E-mail]

## Calling Your Members of Congress

*As the federal community continues to face unprecedented attacks on their earned benefits, NARFE chapters or federations can host their own call-in days. Providing a simple script for your members is an easy way to remind members of Congress that NARFE members continue to pay attention.*

*NARFE provides a toll-free number to Capitol Hill for NARFE members to use. NARFE Headquarters can track the number of calls using the toll-free number. However, some members prefer to use the direct office number. You can locate your representative's and senators' office phone numbers at their congressional websites.*

### Sample Call-in Script to Provide to Members

Tell Your Representative and Senators to protect federal retirement and health benefits

Please call **1-866-220-0044** and make sure your members of Congress know that federal retirees and active employees who protect America's heartbeat won't sit still while they are singled out for unfair cuts.

#### **Step #1: Dial 1-866-220-0044 for the Capitol.**

Ask the operator to connect you to your representative's and/or senators' office. Alternatively, you can find the direct number for your representative and senators by finding their personal site on [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) and [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov), respectively.

#### **Step #2: Tell the staff person who answers the telephone where you live so they know you are a constituent, then say:**

"I am a retired/active federal employee and member of NARFE." [In 1 -2 sentences, tell the staff person a little about your work as a federal employee.]

"[Senator or Representative X] represents thousands of federal workers and retirees and their survivors, and we shouldn't be unfairly singled out to bear the burden of fixing a budget problem we didn't create."

"Federal workers, retirees, and survivors didn't cause the budget crisis – and making extreme cuts to pay, earned health and retirement benefits, or making changes to cost-of-living adjustments, would unfairly single out those who protected our nation, including many now on a fixed income."

#### **Step #3: Thank the staff member for listening and request a written response.**

#### **Step #4: Repeat steps 1 – 3 until you have called your representative and two senators.**

Make sure to only contact your members of Congress. Lawmakers will disregard your message if you are not a constituent.

#### **Step #5: Call the White House toll-free at 1-888-225-08418 and deliver the same message!**

The non-toll-free number is 1-202-456-1414. Before you begin your message, make sure you are connected with the comment line.

## Attending Congressional Town Hall Events

*Attending town hall or tele-town hall events held by members of Congress and posing a question is a great way to raise awareness of and put a local face on federal retirees and federal workforce issues.*

### What Are Town Halls?

Members of Congress hold town halls in their home states to connect with constituents, share legislative updates and take questions.

Traditionally, these town halls are held in community centers, churches, libraries and other public spaces. However, more and more, members of Congress are relying on telephone conference services to hold "tele-town halls," where constituents listen and participate from home over their phone. To find out when tele-town halls are scheduled, call your senator and representative and request to be put on their tele-town hall list. This will ensure you will be included each time one is held.

### When Are Town Halls Held?

Typically, town halls are held during congressional recess periods. Consult the 2013 Congressional Recess Calendar on page 27 for exact dates.

Every member of Congress keeps his or her own schedule. You can contact the district or state office for your representative or senator and ask if (s)he has any town halls scheduled. An updated list is also available on the Legislation Homepage at NARFE's website but it does not always capture all scheduled events.

### What You Can Do

Attend a town hall and speak up! Be sure to wear your NARFE T-shirt or button.

Once a town hall or tele-town hall event is confirmed, team up with your local NARFE chapter and members to attend. The more NARFE members who attend, the more likely your voices will be heard.

Come armed with facts and questions for your senators and representative. Below are some samples you can use.

### Sample Town Hall Questions

- *Federal employees are being asked to make sacrifices to reduce the deficit, yet they have already contributed \$114 billion to deficit reduction. While we are used to serving the public and doing our fair share, what can you do to ensure that all sacrifices will be shared and cuts won't unfairly target federal employees and retirees?*
- *If Congress protects Social Security, why not federal and military retirement as well?*
- *Some in Congress are calling for drastic cuts to the federal workforce. I am a former [profession] in charge of [task]. How will you explain to me and your voters why American taxpayers are going to get less of [service]?*

### Following the Town Hall Tell Us You Attended

Login to the Legislative Action Center at [www.capwiz.com/narfe/lrm/feedback.tt](http://www.capwiz.com/narfe/lrm/feedback.tt) or email [advocacyinaction@narfe.org](mailto:advocacyinaction@narfe.org) to tell headquarters about your meeting. This information is important in our continued communications with members of Congress.

## **Congressional Outreach at State Conventions**

*This year, the federal community will continue to face unprecedented attacks on your earned benefits. As NARFE members join together for state federation conventions, it is a prime opportunity to participate in the Protect America's Heartbeat campaign. State federations can provide opportunities for NARFE members to contact their elected leaders in DC.*

### **Letters**

Print out letters for NARFE members to sign and mail to their members of Congress. The most recent action letter is available on the Legislative Action Center at [www.capwiz.com/narfe](http://www.capwiz.com/narfe), or by requesting one from NARFE's Legislative Department.

For members who want to personalize or write their own letters, provide a notepad and sample letters. Make sure to provide the correct addresses for headings and envelopes.

You can collect all of the letters and mail them together to your member of Congress' local office or provide individual envelopes for people to use. You can also collect the letters and present them to the elected official or a representative if they will be attending your convention. Finally, you can also take the collected letters to your member's local office following the convention. E-mail is the fastest way to get your view points across to your member of Congress.

If you have internet access at the convention venue, you can provide the opportunity for NARFE members to send emails. In the back of the main convention room, have a laptop (or a few) setup to the NARFE Legislative Action Center ([www.capwiz.com/narfe](http://www.capwiz.com/narfe)). Members can complete the form and send an email to their congressional representatives in a few minutes.

### **Phone Calls**

During breaks in the activity or if the convention is ahead of schedule, you can have your members call their elected officials from cell phones. Prior to breaks, have somebody announce the phone numbers. If you provide scripts for your members, include the phone number(s) on the top of the script.

NARFE provides a toll-free number to the Capitol Switchboard: 866-220-0044. NARFE is able to track the number of callers using this number and can provide results to chapter or federation leaders. You can also provide your members the direct phone number to their representative's or senators' offices, but NARFE is not able to track those calls.

You can also provide a phone script for your members, a sample of which is available in the Toolkit or by requesting the most up-to-date one from NARFE Headquarters. Have copies of the script at the registration table or at tables in the convention meeting space.

### **Not Hosting a Convention in 2013?**

You can still get involved!

You can pick a date and have your own statewide call-in day. Or email your members with a link to the email on the Legislative Action Center or a sample letter for them to mail to members of Congress.



**PROTECT** *America's Heartbeat*



## 2013 Congressional Recess Calendar

### House

February 19 – 22  
March 25 – 29  
April 1 – 5  
April 29 – May 3  
May 28 – 31  
July 1 – 5  
August 5 – 30  
September 3- 6  
September 23 – 27  
October 15 – 18  
November 4 – 8  
November 25 – 29

### Senate

February 18 – February 22  
March 25 – April 5  
April 29 – May 3  
May 27 – May 31  
July 1 – July 5  
August 5 – September 6  
October 14 – October 18

*Disclosure: These dates were accurate as of January 2013 and congressional calendars change regularly. Check with your member's office or website to determine exactly when he/she will be in the District.*

# Protect America's Heartbeat Facebook Advocacy Guide

## What is Facebook and why are we using it?

- Facebook is a social networking website that allows users to stay connected with friends and family, to discover what's going on in the world, and to share and express what matters to them.
- The NARFE Headquarters Facebook page is a place where you can get up-to-date information on NARFE's activities and the Protect America's Heartbeat campaign.
- Through Facebook, we can promote our advocacy activities and spread our message to elected officials.
- It's easy and quick to post about your advocacy efforts on Facebook. Use the ideas below to post about events and meetings with elected officials on your own Facebook page.



## Follow NARFE on Facebook

- Go to [www.facebook.com/NARFEHQ](http://www.facebook.com/NARFEHQ) and click "Like" to follow NARFE on Facebook.
- Don't forget to like and share our posts on your Facebook page to help spread our message.

## Sharing your story

- Sharing your story about the importance of active and retired federal workers is a great way to show the public all the ways federal employees protect America's heartbeat every day.
- Remember to post a photo along with your story and go to [www.facebook.com/NARFEHQ](http://www.facebook.com/NARFEHQ) for examples.
- To submit your story:
  - First, find the post box on your Facebook page and select which type of post you are submitting (text, photo, or video). In the post box, type your story of how you protect America's heartbeat.
  - When you are happy with your story, remember to tag the NARFE Headquarters Facebook page in the post so we can see your story.
    - To tag the NARFE Headquarters Facebook page in your post, simply add "@NARFEHQ" to the end of your post and select the NARFE Headquarters Facebook page.
  - When you have completed your post, click "Share" and your post will be added to your Facebook timeline.

## Posting about meetings

- Are you attending a meeting with an elected official? Before you get there, decide who will take photos during the event and post on Facebook after the event.
- Find your elected official's Facebook page so you can mention and tag them in your posts about the event or meeting.
- In your post, report back about your favorite moment from the event or meeting. Below is a sample post that you can customize:
  - *Last week we attended [elected official's name] town hall event and shared our stories about all the ways federal employees Protect America's Heartbeat. [Insert your favorite part of the event here]!*
- Remember to also thank the elected officials you met with by posting a thank you on their Facebook wall.

## **Media Materials**

**The documents in this section are to guide NARFE members in reaching out to the media and provide templates for media advocacy efforts**

## How to Write and Submit a Letter to the Editor (LTE)

*Writing a letter to the editor of your local newspaper is a great advocacy tool and helps create awareness of the need to protect federal retirement and health benefits. A letter to the editor (LTE) is just that — a letter written to a newspaper by a reader in order to respond to a previous article or to offer a newsworthy opinion.*

### **Step #1: Choose when to submit an LTE.**

LTEs are most often placed when they are written in response to an article/editorial and either point out an alternate perspective, or highlight/strengthen the piece. In some cases it may make sense to submit an LTE that does not relate back to a particular article, but rather highlights a recent local event (e.g., the introduction of proposals to cut federal employee benefits).

### **Step #2: Choose what to write in an LTE.**

LTEs should be able to stand on their own and make sense to readers who may not have read the original article to which it is responding.

### **Step #3: Write your LTE.**

LTEs should be focused and direct. Trying to cover several topics and making too many points reduces the impact, so try to keep to one subject if possible.

### **Step #4: Keep it brief.**

Newspapers and online outlets have different word count requirements for LTEs, but, in general, it is best to keep them as short and succinct as possible (usually between 150-250 words).

### **Step #5: List your info.**

Always include your credentials and contact information, as most publications will require verbal or written verification that you have authored the piece. As with op-eds, timing is everything. News goes stale very fast, so submit LTEs as quickly as possible.

### **Step #6: Follow up after you submit.**

Most newspapers have areas online where you can post comments to articles. If your LTE does not get placed, consider going online and adding your letter as a comment to a story.

## Sample Letter to the Editor

### We Need Our Federal Employees

Sadly, there is a growing sentiment in America, on the airwaves and in town halls that our country can make do without a strong federal workforce. As a [Former/Active] federal employee and a proud American, I want to set the record straight: America needs our federal employees.

The indifference toward federal employees might stem from a misunderstanding of who these Americans are and what they do for each of us. So let's start there.

Today, more than 84 percent of federal employees work outside the Washington, DC, metropolitan area – including [Insert Number Of Federal Employees] in [Insert State]. On average, they are paid 20 to 35 percent less than they would be in the private sector, yet they still go to work every day in every state to protect and drive the progress of our country.

Our federal employees ensure that our most basic needs as a society are met – from the safety of the food we eat to the quality of the air we breathe. Some spend their days thwarting the spread of infectious disease while others raise the alarm whenever a storm is coming.

Federal employees work on America's behalf. Let's not get in their way.

[Name]

[Former/Current Position]

## Sample Letter to the Editor

### Refute Federal vs. Private Pay Argument

Sadly, there is a growing sentiment in America, on the airwaves and in town halls that our country can make do without a strong federal workforce.

Part of this sentiment stems from reports that federal employees are paid more than their private-sector counterparts.

Some of these reports are faulty and unfounded, but others recently released by reputable sources reflect reality. The Federal Salary Council (FSC), based on non-partisan data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, determined that today's federal workers are paid 34.6 percent less than their private-sector counterparts.

Meanwhile, another study by the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) shows a more mixed picture. It says America's most experienced and educated federal workers are greatly underpaid, while the less experienced and educated workers are overpaid once benefits are factored in.

I'm not going to argue with the CBO, but it is worth noting that it makes sense that the starting salary of an administrative assistant at the CIA is slightly higher than that of an administrative assistant at a top law firm.

[Name]

[Former/Current Position]

## How to Write and Submit an Op-Ed

*Writing an op-ed for a local newspaper is an influential way to insert NARFE's viewpoint into an ongoing conversation, or one you want to generate in the community. An op-ed is a newspaper article that expresses an opinion about an issue in the news. The name op-ed comes from its usual location in the paper, opposite the editorial page.*

### **Step #1: Choose when to submit an op-ed.**

Op-eds are most likely to be placed when there is a public debate or coverage of a particular issue, perhaps occurring around cutting the deficit or raising the debt limit. In some cases, they may also be tied to events. However, those pieces are generally more difficult to place if they do not have a strong and relevant news hook. The biggest rule about when to submit is to submit before it's too late — news goes stale very fast.

### **Step #2: Choose what to write in an op-ed.**

Many regional newspapers receive pieces with a national angle from newspaper syndicates, so it's best to emphasize a local/regional angle, if possible (e.g., a personal story, local statistic about the largest local federal agency, and/or a local event).

### **Step #3: Write the op-ed.**

Op-eds should clearly articulate the problem at the beginning of the piece (e.g., federal employees in this state have become the scapegoat for the nation's budget problems). Then narrow the arguments down to a very regional point (e.g., we can't afford to lose services like food safety inspection that federal employees in our state provide to us). Conclude with a clearly defined call-to-action (e.g., when voting on solutions to our national deficit, our representatives in Congress must acknowledge the will of their constituents and recognize that our federal employees do to protect and move America forward).

### **Step #4: Choose who should 'sign' an op-ed.**

Consider regional figureheads who support your issue and determine if it might be more advantageous to ask them to sign, or cosign, the piece once it is written. Remember that the op-ed's byline might not always be the same person that actually wrote the words.

### **Step #5: Check your word count.**

Newspapers and online outlets have different word count requirements for op-eds, but, in general, it is best to keep them between 650 to 700 words. Check the outlets' websites for information about word count requirements, as this information is usually listed in their editorial section.

### **Step #6: List your info.**

Always include your credentials and contact information, as most publications will require verbal or written verification that you have authored the piece.

### **Step #7: Follow up after you submit.**

If you have not heard back from the publication within 24 to 48 hours, it's usually a good idea to follow up via phone or email. If you receive a "no," then you should consider submitting to another local paper or online outlet. If there are no alternatives, consider posting your piece on a blog.

### **Step #8: Posting your piece on a blog.**

There are limitless blogs that you can post your opinions on. Some blogs, like the popular TPM Café (<http://tpmcafe.talkingpointsmemo.com/>), require you to sell them on the idea in the same way you must convince a newspaper to print your op-ed. Other blogs, like BuzzFeed (<http://www.buzzfeed.com>) allow you to simply post your piece directly.

## Sample Op-Ed

While serving in the federal workforce for years, I had the honor of doing my part alongside our nation's millions of federal employees and the active and retired federal workers in [State].

Although we worked for many federal agencies under many presidential administrations, one thing we all have in common is our dedication to our country. On behalf of this industrious and patriotic crew, I write to urge you to preserve this great American asset, which as you know, is responsible for the protection and progress of our nation.

As proud public servants, it is not in our nature to brag about the work we do on America's behalf. Yet it is worth mentioning that my fellow federal workers have important jobs, and they go to work every day in every state across the country to ensure that our most basic needs as a society are met. There are [#] active and retired federal employees right here in [State].

It's our federal employees who assure the safety of the food we eat and the cleanliness of the air we breathe. Some of us spend our days raising the alarm whenever a storm is coming and others rush to the rescue when disaster strikes.

The success of America's business engine depends on America's federal employees who pave the way for trade treaties, patents and investment. And it is our federal workers who are pushing the limits of science and venturing 200,000 miles into outer-space. Simultaneously, it is our federal workers who have their sights set closer to home as they monitor and uphold our national security.

From my decades of experience, it is encouraging that the strength of our federal workforce grows with each successive generation as knowledge and lessons are passed on. As a result of this growth, our country now has the greatest team ever assembled in history to keep America on course, moving forward and safe. Do not take this resource for granted.

Various proposals in the nation's fiscal debate jeopardize the future strength of America's federal workforce. These proposals would unduly tax federal workers, substantially reduce the compensation of federal workers who were permanently injured on the job, and even shave one in 10 jobs from the federal government with no regard for the importance of a position.

I understand the seriousness of the country's fiscal situation – every active and retired federal worker does. This up-close-and-personal understanding is why now, more than ever, I believe our country needs to maintain and attract the best federal employees we can get to not only help us rise above, but also solve this crisis.

Please do not allow America's federal workforce to be weakened by others who portray it as the problem. From my professional experience working beside talented federal employees from various U.S. agencies, I know that our strong federal workforce will be part of the solution to get our country back on track.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[NARFE Chapter]