



BEEHIVE CHIMES



NEWSLETTER OF UTAH FEDERATION OF CHAPTERS

Isabel Sullivan, Editor

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Website: Narfe.org/site/UT

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The government's one day shut down fortunately did not impact most services provided by civilian employees. But as we all know, the continuing resolution is only a temporary “fix” and we still face the possibility of another occurrence, the result of the lack of statesmanship and the art of compromise on the part of our elected senators and representatives.

It is hoped that those of you who have access to the internet have been taking advantage of the NARFE Legislative Action Center to personalize and send your letters to our congressional delegation. Let them know how we feel about legislation which ultimately prevents government employees from doing their jobs. Those letters also serve to remind our delegation that government salaries and annuities are earned benefits, not “entitlements”. They should not be a “piggy bank” from which they can draw on to reduce a deficit which was not caused by government employees. Those of you without internet access can still make your voices heard by use of the telephone and regular mail. Letters sent to the local office of your representative and senator are just as effective, and are received without having to go through the screening process done by the Washington offices.

Our recent snowfall, thankfully having a lot of moisture, shows winter is still with us. It is hoped every one continues to be warm and safe, mindful of neighbors who may not be physically able to shovel their driveways and sidewalks, and would be grateful for a few pairs of helpful hands.

Marla Ramey, President, Utah Federation

MESSAGE FROM REGION VII VICE PRESIDENT RODNEY ADELMAN

Good news on the membership front. NARFE's 2017 year-end membership count was 208,825. NARFE's membership total actually increased in each of the last three months of 2017 (October +167, November +62, and December +184). While NARFE lost a total of 6,935 members last year, this compares to losses of 17,028 in 2014, 11,332 in 2015, and 9,798 in 2016. The number of new members in 2017 was 13,060 (this compares to 9,922 in 2015 and 10,126 in 2016). The National Executive Board believes this demonstrates the positive impact of the Federal Benefits Institute and optional chapter membership. At the end of December, 61.4% of our members were chapter members.

Region VII closed the year with 12,665 members, with a loss of 110 members during the year.

Standing Committees met in late January at NARFE HQ to review Bylaw amendments and other resolutions. The Bylaws and Resolutions Committee report is now available on the NARFE website and will be included in the April *narfe* magazine, along with a listing of Federations holding required annual meetings this year. The March *narfe* magazine will include candidate statements, which are currently online, as well as a listing of Federations holding elections this year. Voting begins May 10 online. The June *narfe* magazine will include the ballot for the election of officers and for your votes on the Bylaw amendments and resolutions. Voting ends June 30. Newly elected officers' terms will begin November 1. Ted Van Hintum,

immediate past Colorado Federation President, is running for National President, along with three other candidates. The initial ballot will include a question asking the membership to authorize “preferential voting” for the second ballot for National President, to avoid further, costly run-off elections for National President. More information will be forthcoming on the preferential voting election process. I urge your support for the question on preferential voting. Also, I will be running unopposed for another term as your Region VII Vice President.

Plans for NARFE’s FIRST National Conference, entitled FEDcon18, are taking shape. The National Conference will be held in Jacksonville, Florida, August 26 - 28, at the Hyatt Regency Jacksonville Riverfront hotel. The NARFE website now includes a link to the FEDcon18 website, www.narfe.org/FEDcon18. Please consider attending this unique NARFE event.

The “public” side of the NARFE website, www.narfe.org, has been “refreshed”. Why not check it out? And finally, if you participate in the TSP, the beneficiary forms have been updated, particularly for contingent beneficiaries. Please consider completing new forms.

LEGISLATION

Top LEGISLATIVE accomplishments from NARFE message December 26, 2017: **Thwarted ALL attempts by Congress and the President to cut the earned pay and benefits of federal employees and retirees:**

President Trump’s Fiscal Year 2018 Budget Proposal called for at least \$149 billion in cuts to earned retirement benefits for current and former federal employees. Specifically, the budget proposed:

- Eliminating cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) for federal retirees covered by the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS).
- Reducing COLAs by 0.5 percent each year from what they would be otherwise for federal retirees covered by the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS). Eliminating the FERS Annuity Supplement for new retirees.
- Increasing federal employee contributions to retirement by 1 percent of pay each year for the next six years, without any corresponding benefit increase.
- Basing retirement benefits for new retirees on the highest five years of salary instead of the highest three years of salary.

✓ **Protected postal retirees’ health benefits through the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program**

The House Oversight and Government Reform Committee approved postal reform legislation, H.R., 756 that would require all current postal retirees and their spouses to enroll in Medicare or forfeit their earned retiree health benefits coverage through FEHB Program.

- This removes the postal retiree’s choice as to whether to incur significant additional premium costs for additional coverage.
- By adding a new condition to the receipt of health benefits in retirement, the bill would break a basic promise and precedent not to change retiree benefits after retirement.
- NARFE opposes the provisions, and sought to amend the bill to remove them. Despite efforts to advance the bill through Congress, its progress has stalled, largely due to the Medicare provisions. Notably, a year-end push to include the bill in a larger legislative vehicle failed.

✓ **Helped provide more flexible withdrawal options for TSP participants, giving them more control over their own retirement savings. (See Jan 2018 NARFE magazine, page 6)**

The president signed the TSP Modernization Act, into law, P.L. 115-84, on November 17, 2017. The law does the following:

- Allows multiple, partial post-separation withdrawals, which individuals can time to their individual needs.
- Permits multiple, age-based withdrawals for participants who are still working and are older than age 59-1/2, and subsequent post-separation partial withdrawals.
- Provides greater flexibility for those receiving periodic payments by (i) allowing the election of quarterly or annual payments; (ii) allowing periodic withdrawals to be changed at any point during the year; (iii) allowing periodic payments to be stopped while leaving the account balance in the TSP; and (iv) permitting the purchase of an annuity or a partial withdrawal while in periodic payment status.
- Eliminates the withdrawal election deadline.

Make Your Voice Heard in Congress

NARFE members are encouraged to use the [NARFE Legislative Action Center](#) to quickly and easily send letters to members of Congress on a variety of NARFE issues, sign up for action alerts and track NARFE-related bills and votes. See NARFE magazine, pages 12-13 for the NARFE Bill Tracker.

Medicare Reimbursement Accounts (MRA). Depending on your FEHB insurance plan and the option of that plan, you may be eligible and if so, received a notice about signing up for the MRA account. For example, those that have BCBS Basic Option and are enrolled in Medicare Part A and B, are eligible to be reimbursed up to \$600 per calendar year for your Medicare Part B premium payments. If you have questions, call the number on the back of your insurance card.

Nancy Carlson-Gotts
Vice President, Legislation

NEWS FROM CHAPTERS

SALT LAKE #0155: Our January meeting was focused on Legislation, from both the NARFE magazine and in the emails from NARFE HQ. From the handouts provided, we reviewed and discussed the bills, and provided information on contacting congress about them (ideas on writing letters and calling and using the Legislative Action Center as noted above.)

Our February meeting, Tuesday, February 20 at 1:00 PM at the Mt. Olympus Senior Center, will be our annual "Update on Taxes". This year there should be plenty to talk about with the tax bill that was recently passed by Congress.

Our guest speaker is Karen Moore from H&R Block. If you have questions that Ms. Moore may need to research, please let me know and I will pass them on to her.

Nancy Carlson-Gotts, President. 801 502 2167

LAYTON # 829: We had 19 members and guests attend this month. Mr. David W. Paice, owner of Paice Tax and Accounting, Inc., gave a very informative presentation of current and future 2018 tax laws. *He specialized in the Federal Workers and Retirees tax laws.*

President Crawford reminded us to contact our congressmen and senators while they are home on break regarding the issues NARFE has listed in the national NARFE monthly magazine.

Our next meeting is being held at Layton Library, at 1:00 PM, on February 14, 2018. Our speaker will be announced by our attendance-reminder callers.

Joan L. Turner, Secretary

CEDAR CITY #1205: There was no meeting in January. Our next meeting will be Monday, February 5, at 12:00 Noon, at the Sizzler Café.

Mitchell Gitz, President

ALZHEIMER'S DONATIONS: from Utah Federation Chapters should be sent by check payable to "NARFE Alzheimer's Research." Be sure your chapter number is on the check where it says "For" or "Remarks." Mail to: John Light, Utah Federation Alzheimer's Chair, 3769 South 3325 West, West Valley City, UT 84119-3509.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR UTAH'S CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION

Sen. Orrin Hatch, Washington, D.C. Office: 202-224-5251; Salt Lake City Office: 801-524-4380 Address: 8402 Federal Bldg., 125 S. State St., Salt Lake City, UT 84138

Sen. Mike Lee, Washington, D.C. Office: 202-224-5444; Salt Lake City: 801-224-5933 Address: Wallace F. Bennett Fed. Bldg., Suite 4225, 125 S. State St., Salt Lake City, UT 84138

Rep. Rob Bishop (District 1), Washington, D.C. Office: 202-225-0453; Ogden Office 801-625-0107 Address: 101 Federal Building, 324 25th Street, Ogden, UT 84401

Rep. Rep. John Curtis (District 3), Washington, D.C. Office: Phone 202-225-7751; 2236 Rayburn House Office Building Washington, DC 20515; Provo Phone (801) 851-2500; Address: 51 S. University Ave., Suite 318, Provo, UT 84601

Rep Mia Love (District 4), Washington, D.C. Office: 202=225-3011; West Jordan Office: 801-996-8729; Address: 9067 S. 1300 West, West Jordan, UT 84088

