



# NARFE Advocacy Amid Emerging Threats and Historic Success

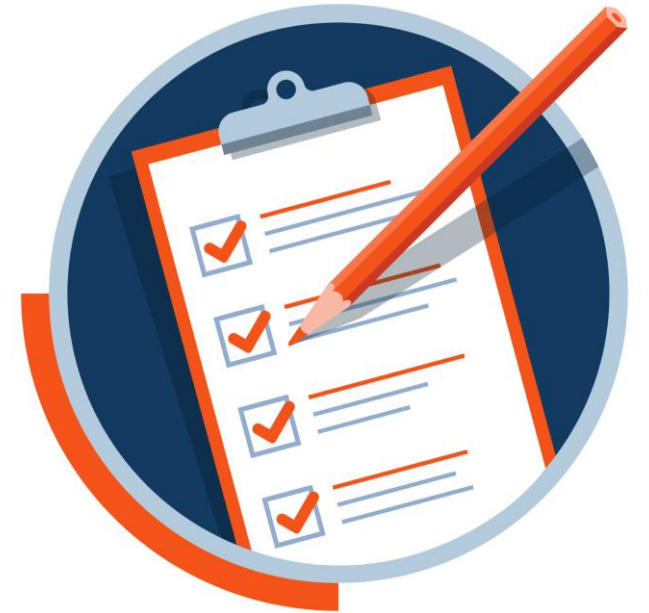
Pennsylvania Federation Conference  
May 13, 2025

**Presented by John Hatton, SVP, Policy and Programs, NARFE**

# Agenda



- **Recap of 2024 Efforts**
- **Advocacy Priorities for 2025-26**
- **Emerging Threats**
- **How NARFE – and You – Can Counter Threats**
- **LEGcon25**
- **NARFE-PAC**
- **Questions & Answers**



# Recap of 2024 Efforts



## Social Security Fairness Act, H.R.82/S.597

- **Repeals Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO)**
  - WEP reduces primary Social Security benefit for individuals with noncovered pension (Civil Service Retirement System annuity)
  - GPO reduces or eliminates spousal/survivor benefits for individuals with noncovered pension (CSRS annuity)
- **NARFE Priority for More Than 40 years**



## Social Security Fairness Act, H.R.82/S.597

- **Advocacy Efforts Built Support for Bill**
  - Momentum from previous Congress
    - Committee advanced bill for first time ever in 2022
  - Most cosponsored bill in Congress
    - 330 House cosponsors
    - 62 Senate cosponsors
  - 3 Congressional Hearings (2 House, 1 Senate)





## Social Security Fairness Act, H.R. 82

- **Limited Reform Offer from House Ways and Means**
  - Relief from 2028 through 2032
  - About \$50 per month increase in benefits for WEP
  - Phased in relief for GPO if combined monthly income \$3,000 or less
  - Pays for via administrative changes (but not bipartisan)
- **Push for Committee Markup Shifted to Discharge Petition in House; Floor Vote in Senate**



## Social Security Fairness Act, H.R. 82

- **Graves & Spanberger filed Discharge Petition on September 10**
  - Hit 218 signatures on September 19!!!
    - Achieved in a little more than one week
  - Forced House Floor Vote
- **House Passed Bill on November 12 by a vote of 327-75**



## Social Security Fairness Act, H.R. 82

- **Push for Senate Vote**
  - Capitol Hill Rally on December 11 – Schumer commits to floor vote
- **Senate Consideration**
  - Invoked Cloture on Motion to Proceed by 73-27 vote on December 18
  - Passed Bill on December 21, 76-20 vote
- **President Biden Signed into Law on January 5, 2025**





## Social Security Fairness Act, P.L. 118-273

- **Effective Date**

- Applies to benefits payable after December 2023

- **Implementation**

- Social Security Administration has begun providing backpay, increased monthly benefits
- Apply for benefits (if did not due to GPO, e.g.)
- Ensure direct deposit and address information with SSA is accurate



## Additional Priorities

- **No Cuts to Earned Federal Benefits**
  - No vote on Republican Study Committee budget
    - RSC budget included proposed cuts to benefits
  - No cuts included in budget deal to extend debt limit
  - No “Fiscal Commission” created
- **Increased Cosponsors for Equal COLA Act**
  - From 34 to 95 cosponsors in House, 6 to 11 in Senate
  - Would provide full cost-of-living adjustments





## Additional Priorities

- **Improving OPM Retirement Services**
  - Oversight from appropriations
  - Reduced backlogs
  - Modernization occurring, needs acceleration

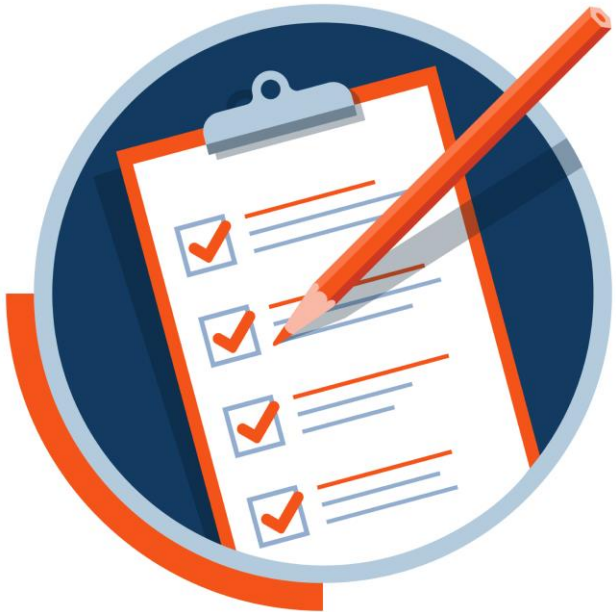


- **Advocating for Choice for Postal Health Benefits**
  - Argued for choice regarding Medicare Part D
  - Exception provided for those living overseas
  - Enrollment flexibility

# Advocacy Priorities for 2025-26



## Overview



- **Oppose** Cuts to Earned Federal Retirement and Health Benefits
- **Protect** the Integrity of Government Operations and the Merit-Based Civil Service
- **Support** Full COLAs for FERS Retirees
- **Support** Policies to Improve Choice, Lower Cost for FEHB/PSHB
- **Improve** OPM Customer Service from Retirement Services



## Oppose Cuts to Earned Retirement and Health Benefits

- **Budget Reconciliation Poses Major Threat**
  - Avoids filibuster, allowing partisan passage in the Senate, with 50 votes
- **Plan to Use Potentially Trillions in Spending Cuts to Offset Cost of Tax Cuts, Other Spending**
- **Cuts to Federal Benefits Among Offsets**



## Oppose Cuts to Earned Retirement and Health Benefits

- **House- and Senate-Passed Budget Resolution, H.Con.Res.14, required \$50 billion in cuts from spending under jurisdiction of House Oversight and Government Reform Committee (OGR)**
  - OGR has jurisdiction over federal retirement and health benefit programs; and not much additional mandatory spending programs
  - Senate committees retain greater flexibility
- **OGR passed “Committee Print” with about \$51 billion in cuts to from federal employee/retiree benefits**
- **Next Step: House Budget Committee, Senate Committee Actions**



## Oppose Cuts to Earned Retirement and Health Benefits



- **Proposed offsets include:**

- ~~Voucher Model for FEHB/PSHB~~
  - You Pay More Than 50% of Premiums After 10 Years
  - \$20k to \$50k cost over 10 years
- ~~Reducing rate of return on Thrift Savings Plan G fund~~
  - Below market rate of return for similar asset (F fund, e.g.)
  - Would recommend moving assets out of TSP
- Increased contributions (increase of 3.6% of pay) toward retirement
  - Does not apply to those subject to mandatory early retirement
  - Phases in over two years (1.8% in 2026, 2027)
- Choose between at-will employment or additional 5% increase in retirement contributions (permanent 5% tax/pay cut)



## Oppose Cuts to Earned Retirement and Health Benefits






### • Proposed offsets include:

- Fee for Merit Systems Protection Board Appeals
  - Would undermine merit-based civil service
- Elimination of Federal Employee Retirement System (FERS) annuity supplement
  - Applies as of date of enactment
  - Does not apply to those forced to retire early (but does apply to those potentially subject to mandatory early retirement)
- High-3 to High-5
  - Applicable for retirements after 1/1/27
  - Does not apply to those subject to mandatory early retirement
- ~~Reductions to/ Elimination of COLAs (not in recent lists, but in past ones)~~



## Protect the Integrity of Government Operations and Protecting the Merit System

-  1. **Oppose Efforts to Eliminate or Undermine the Merit-Based Civil Service**
-  2. **Oppose Across-the-Board Reductions in the Size of the Federal Workforce (and Policies Intended to Facilitate Such)**
-  3. **Support Market Rate Increases to Federal Pay Rates/Oppose Federal Compensation Cuts**



## Protect the Integrity of Government Operations and Protecting the Merit System



- **Support the Saving the Civil Service Act, H.R. 492/S.134**

- Would prohibit return of Schedule F, protect merit based civil service



- **Support Market-Rate Federal Pay Increases**

- Expected Military Raise (2026) – 4.3 percent
- FAIR Act (H.R. 493/S.126)
  - 3.8 percent across-the-board + 1.0 percent average increase in locality pay






## Support Full COLAs for FERS Retirees

- Support of the Equal COLA Act, H.R. 491 / S.624, ensuring FERS COLAs match the change in consumer prices (and the CSRS COLA)
- If CPI increases above 2%, FERS retirees do not receive full COLA
  - If between 2% and 3%, FERS COLA = 2%
  - If above 3%, FERS COLA = CPI minus 1%





## Support Improved Choice/Lower Costs for FEHB/PSHB

-  • **Maintain Choice for Part B**
-  • **Allow Part D Opt-Out**
-  • **Reimbursement for Part B Premiums**



## Improve OPM Customer Service from Retirement Services



### • Support Improvements to OPM Customer Service

- Congressional oversight of OPM RS
- Support IT modernization and proper funding



### • NARFE Continues to Receive Complaints From Members

- Inability to connect to OPM
- Delays processing transactions (e.g., changes to health benefits)
- Delays starting survivor annuities

# Emerging Threats



## Politicizing the Civil Service

- **Schedule Policy/Career (P/C), formerly Schedule F**
  - Directs reclassification of employees identified as holding positions of a “confidential, policy-determining, policy-making, or policy-advocating” character
  - New Schedule P/C classification in the excepted service would not have competitive service protections to ensure merit-based hiring and firing
  - Interpreted broadly, could apply to 50,000 or more federal employees



## Politicizing the Civil Service

- **“Restoring Accountability” to Senior Executive Service**
  - Asserts the president has Article II power to terminate senior executives, despite statutory law to the contrary





## Reducing the Size of the Federal Workforce

- **“Department of Government Efficiency” (DOGE)**
  - Takes place of United States Digital Service, created under President Barack Obama
  - Stated intent to “modernize federal technology and software to maximize government efficiency and productivity”
  - Embedding DOGE-detailees within agencies
  - Gaining access to IT systems/data government-wide



- **Return to Office**
  - Directs end to remote work
  - Reasonable accommodation requests



## Reducing the Size of the Federal Workforce

- **Eliminating DEIA**
  - Ends all diversity, equity and inclusion programs
    - No recognition that diversity is critical to ensuring a representative government
  - All employees engaged in DEIA work placed on administrative leave
- **Hiring Freeze**
  - 90 days initially
  - Attrition-based reductions (hire 1 for every 4 who leave)
- **Guidance on Options for Workforce Reductions**
  - Highlights that employees on probationary periods can be fired
  - Encourages use of paid administrative leave
  - Suggests using temporary details of up to 120 days (essentially encourages resigning)



## “Deferred Resignation” Offer

- **Type ‘Resign,’ Hit ‘Send’**
- **Email indicates intent to reduce workforce (via changes to at-will employment, or reductions in force)**
- **Paid without working until September 30, 2025**
- **Remaining Uncertainty**
  - Unclear legal authority, but no court dismissed challenge for lack of standing
  - Unclear work requirements (“rare cases”)
  - Ethics rules apply to getting another job
  - Agency head retains power to rescind offer
  - Agreement waives all legal claims against government



## Reducing the Size of the Federal Workforce

- **Firing 25,000+ Probationary Employees**
  - Many probationary because promoted, in new position
  - Courts reversed due to being directed by OPM, which does not have authority to do so
- **Agency RIF (Reduction-in-Force) and Reorganization Plans**
  - Phase One plans due March 13; Phase Two due April 14
  - Agencies Have Begun RIFs



## Canceling Spending / Eliminating Agencies

- **Eliminating Agencies**
  - USAID
  - Department of Education
  - CFPB
- **Canceling / Pausing Spending**
  - Challenge to Impoundment Control Act





## Combined Impact of Policies

- **Eliminate federal jobs in disfavored federal agencies, overall**
  - Stop carrying out function?
  - Replace humans with Artificial Intelligence?
  - Contract out jobs?
- **Assumption of executive power over congressional spending directives**
- **Data privacy concerns via DOGE activities**

# How NARFE – And You – Can Counter Threats



## Summary of Actions

- Inform the Public / Members
- Provide Resources for Feds to Make Best Decisions for Themselves
- Lawsuits Challenging Schedule F, Privacy Act Violations
- Direct Advocacy to Congress
- Grassroots Advocacy



## Lawsuits Challenging Administration Actions

- Schedule P/C
  - Executive order violates Administrative Procedures Act
  - Interpretation violates statute
- Privacy Act Violations
  - Unauthorized disclosure of personal information
  - Without applicable exception or consent
  - Poses danger of abuse of power
  - Secured preliminary injunction against DOGE affiliate access to OPM, ED, Treasury



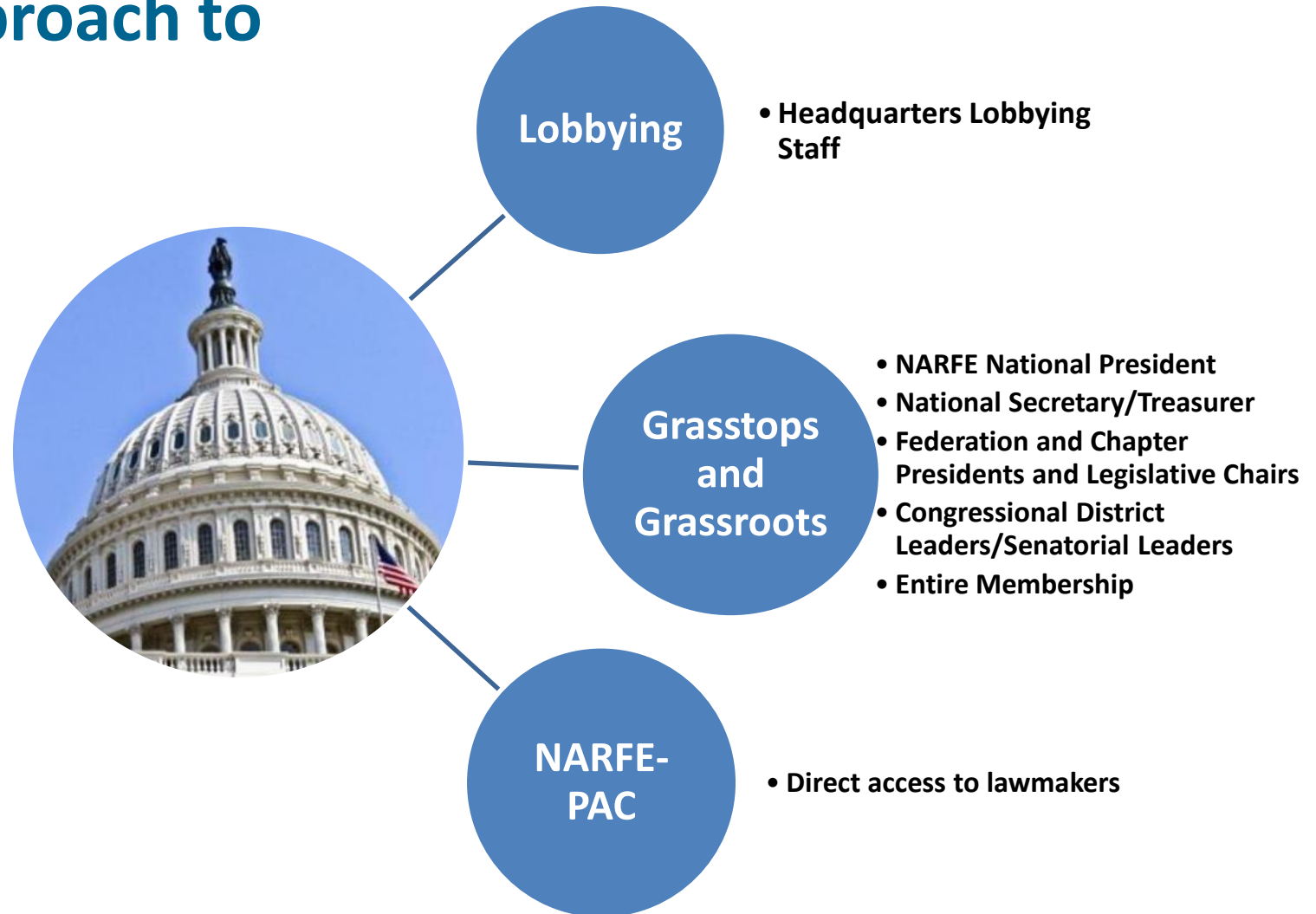
## Requests to Congress

- Public Opposition to Actions
- Support “none of the funds shall be used” language in appropriations bills to block objectionable actions
- Support co-sponsorship of the Saving the Civil Service Act, H.R. 492/S.134, to prohibit a return of Schedule F
- Exercise oversight by requesting legal justification for actions
- Support other resolutions, bills, and actions as is necessary to limit objectionable policy, and at the very least, stop illegal, unconstitutional action

# How NARFE – And You – Can Counter Threats



## A Three-Legged Approach to Advocacy





## What You Can Do – Visit NARFE’s Legislative Action Center

- Urge Congress to Protect Earned Federal Retirement and Health Benefits
- Urge Congress to Stand Up for Public Servants, Rule of Law
- Urge Congress to Protect Your and Other Americans’ Private Data

# LEGcon25



**Don't miss NARFE's premier virtual grassroots training conference!** Attend grassroots advocacy training sessions and “lobby day” where you join your fellow NARFE members in bringing our message directly to lawmakers and their staff.

**June 9-11, 2025**

Register Now!

# NARFE-PAC



## Why NARFE-PAC is Important

Helps elect Fed-  
friendly members  
of Congress

Builds strong  
relationships with  
lawmakers

Ensures federal  
community is  
political force

Pools individual  
contributions to  
maximize impact

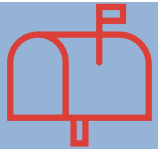
Empowers  
strongest  
supporters



Visit [www.narfe.org/narfe-pac](http://www.narfe.org/narfe-pac) to contribute



***NARFE-PAC* Magazine Article in the March Issue**



**NARFE-PAC's Letter Campaign**



**Calling Headquarters**

- **1-800-456-8410, option 3**



**Thank You!**

[jhatton@narfe.org](mailto:jhatton@narfe.org)

**Questions?**