



ANNANDALE

**January 2026**

## CHAPTER 1159 NEWS

**National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association Annandale**

P.O. Box 1463, Annandale, VA 22003

**Advocacy – Education – Community**

**Serving Current, Former, & Retired Federal Employees.**

**Their Spouses & Survivor Annuitants**

We meet at **John Calvin Presbyterian Church**, 6531 Columbia Pike, Annandale, Virginia

**Next Meeting:** Wednesday, **February 4, 2026**. Snacks & visiting 9A.M.

**Meeting begins 9:30 A.M.**



Like us on Facebook at [NARFE-Annandale 1159](https://www.facebook.com/NARFE-Annandale-1159)

**Visit our new website at <https://www.narfe.org/chapter1159/>**

**Inclement Weather Policy** --When Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) are closed or “virtual only” because of inclement weather on the day of a scheduled chapter meeting, the chapter meeting that month (both in-person and on Zoom) is canceled. If the FCPS is open only 2 hours late on that day, the in-person and the Zoom meeting will be held.

### **PREZ SEZ**

**Kim Rendelson, Chapter President**

I’ve started this Prez Sez many times, sometimes getting muddled down in the nightmare the federal government has experienced in the last year. So many lives have been impacted and, of course, the country is in crisis. I finally looked back at last year’s Prez Sez for inspiration. At this juncture last year, I was healing a fractured sternum from which I am completely healed and suffering no aftereffects, except, sadly...our Program Chair isn’t bringing me room service anymore. Sigh... Our world continues to be so chaotic and scary that facing each day is challenging. So, as I said last year, be kind to yourself and others and be mindful of people you allow into your life. Among those people, I find our chapter members to be warm, kind, welcoming, and caring — for which I remain thankful.

**Sound Issues** – We know it’s a problem and we are trying to find a solution. While we certainly hope to continue to be able to provide Zoom meetings, we cannot continue having members who show up in person for meetings not be able to hear our speakers. A committee is working on this and we will do our best to make sure ALL can hear.

**Volunteers Issues** – Yes, I am back again and I know you’ve heard this before, but for this chapter to keep going we need volunteers to provide support. Do you possibly have one hour

each month? Or 2 hours for one short-term project? Please think about it. We need an **Alzheimer's Chair**, a short-term **Public Relations** review (that 2 hours or less effort I alluded to above), AND the occasional, though very rare, **back-up for Zoom**.

**Please note**, we will no longer have a Sunshine/Outreach Chairperson position. No one was interested in taking this on. It began in a different era and may no longer be relevant. We will continue notifying the membership when a member is ill or has passed away and can provide contact information if you wish to contact the affected persons or loved ones.

**January's Speaker: Steps on a Journey to Hearing Aids – Gabe Goldberg** explained that when he began his journey, over three years ago, there were no Over the Counter (OTC) devices that could be considered real hearing aids. Most options were simple amplification devices. But correcting or compensating for hearing loss involves more than just amplification to be effective. G. Goldberg uses an OTICON product that can potentially link to Apple devices (iPad, iPhone, Apple Watch) as well as other devices (sound systems and televisions). This product line can also link to Android devices.

G. Goldberg emphasized that there is a wide range of options in the hearing aid domain; perhaps far too many. And there are a number of considerations that must be made: capability (what is needed for your personal situation), cost, how much or if they will be covered by your insurance plan, the style of device (behind the ear, in the ear, or deep in the ear canal, and cochlear implants), battery or rechargeable, level of technology, providers near you, and availability of service near you, as well as warranty considerations.

He recommends that you receive a medical hearing examination to begin your search and once each year following. This will make sure that other medical issues or situations are not the cause as well as predict what kind of aids may be able to assist based on the reason for hearing loss. This examination should result in an Audiogram. This graph provides information about both left and right ears and shows the severity of loss in each.

Research can begin online via YouTube sites such as

[https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=hearing+docs](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=hearing+docs)

Or at the Northern Virginia Research Center for Deaf and Hearing Loss. <https://www.nvrc.org/>

Providers can vary a great deal. Researching what is available and where is important. Be sure to comparison-shop. Do not take just the first solution offered without comparing two or more solutions and providers. Do not allow pressure of a 'deal' if taken now to determine what you decide upon. This is an important decision, an individual decision, and requires good research and careful evaluation. Take notes with each option as there are details about each that

may differ and help you make the best choice. Be sure you know how they work and what options each offers. Gabe recommends that individuals use an Ear, Nose, and Throat physician (M.D. in Otolaryngology) or a certified Audiologist (Au.D.). Some services do not have access to these degree and certification programs. Providers can be found by using the TruHearing referral services:

<https://www.truhearing.com/articles/ask-a-provider/how-can-i-find-a-provider-near-me/>

But not all insurers will support all provider services. Often a provider only offers one brand, a limited scope of models, and may not have licensed/certified staff available. Some offer to refurbish your aids at low or now cost and to replace batteries (even rechargeable batteries will not hold a charge after a while.) Some even offer a reasonably priced loaner while your aids are being sent out for refurbishing.

Once acquired, G. Goldberg suggests using them as much as possible as a means of training your brain and getting the most consistent use of the device. The aids require regular maintenance, including cleaning the device and the filters found in them. While the ‘domes’ are usually long-lasting, the filters should be replaced periodically. If lost, many services offer a one-time replacement at a reasonable fee. The key takeaway is to research and compare the brand, the devices, the providers, and the services making sure you understand the insurance considerations and any discounts available.

### December Meeting Report

**Ed Reniker, Secretary**

Those attending the meeting enjoyed the program, a terrific spread of snacks (salty, savory, and sweet), and each other’s company. Consider joining us in February!

**Officers for 2026** – The officers for 2026 were sworn in by Carol Campbell, the Virginia Federation of NARFE (VFN) Area IX Vice President. She administered the oath of office to: President Kim Rendelson, First Vice President John Bankson, Treasurer Jack Bagnulo, and Secretary Ed Reniker.



Officers Kim Rendell, Jack Bagnulo, Ed Reniker, & John Bankson sworn in by Carol Campbell

**New Region Affiliation** - Our chapter has recently moved from Region IX to Region X. The move of Regions is meant to balance the workloads of our regional representatives. Ted Pasek from Fairfax will be our new VP in Region X.

**Programs for 2026 – Gabe Goldberg** has outlined our meeting programs for the new year. Note in your calendar the first Wednesdays of each month for membership meetings.

- **February 4** - Alan Jacobson will speak to us on exploring differences between fact and fiction in crime, mystery, and intelligence stories.
- **March 4** - Steve Gurney will provide a new Perspective on Aging.
- **April 1** – We are tentatively scheduled to have Heather Johnson, the Navy Federal Credit Union chief economist, speak to us.
- **May 6** – Mary Ann Munley will invite speakers for the annual Report from Richmond.
- **June 3** – June Luncheon Meeting.

**ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION Alzheimer's Report** Our goal for donations for 2025 was \$4,000. We blew that out of the water with a total of \$5,159 as of the end of the year!

**T4" TWO" Raffle (hint! hint!) for Alzheimer Research:** Need a new approach for surprising your Valentine this year? We are here to help kickoff a different "Valentine Holiday" for your special someone with a surprise basket of hearts (and kisses from you) this year. Raffle tickets are \$1.00 each and will be available at the February 4th membership meeting. Come on, ...take a chance. Buy one or more tickets for every sweetheart you know. See the Valentine Basket at the Welcome/Sign-in table as you enter the meeting. Thank you for your "sweet" participation and for helping Alzheimer's Research.

### Hospitality and ACCA Food Drive

**Sharon Sellers, Chair**


Thanks to all who contribute to our bounty of snacks and treats for our meetings. Snacks not enjoyed during our meeting were provided to the Mason District Police and our host, John Calvin Presbyterian Church staff.



Kim Rendelson (NARFE Chapter 1159 President), Beth Werker and Roberta Nielsen (ACCA Pantry Volunteers), Sue Mairena (ACCA President), Sharon Sellers (NARFE Chapter 1159/ACCA Volunteer), Mike Dembowski (Giant Food Manager) and Kiersten Portlock (Assistant Manager, Giant Food)

**What you may have missed from the Holidays...**Following the success of the 2025 ACCA Food Drives, (3,520 pounds and \$2,268 in cash) partner and host Giant Food Annandale Manager, Mike Dembowski, and Assistant Manager, Kiersten Portlock, contacted our coordinator, Sharon Sellers, to assemble all participants from the fall food drive to the store on November 20, 2025, for a secret surprise. In spite of the busy holiday approaching, the presidents of both NARFE Chapter 1159 and of ACCA assembled with great anticipation. Giant Food Managers, Mike and Kiersten, joined the

team with big smiles and each pushing a shopping cart filled with what turned out to be an even bigger surprise to the team. We couldn't believe they had stacks of what turned out to be 75 pecan and pumpkin pies for distribution to families receiving Thanksgiving dinners from the ACCA Food Pantry. It was truly the perfect reward to end a *sweet* fall campaign for all of us! Thanks to all of our partners, including the Mason District Police, who help make this happen for our community.

 **Pajama and Slipper Drive Ends January 26, 2026:** Several members attending the January 7th membership meeting brought new pajamas and "cold, hard cash" for the annual Mason District Police's **PJ, Slipper (and Sock) Drive**. We delivered the collection to the Mason District Police Station, where we were greeted with big smiles and heartfelt thanks. As a reminder, both boy and girl in sizes from infants to teens, are needed. If you wish to donate but can't get to the Mason District Station, please contact Sharon Sellers, 703-915-8765, for assistance. As always, thank you for bringing warmth and comfort to those in need this winter.

## Legislation Report



**Mary Ann Munley, Chair**

**Federal Budget:** The current Continuing Resolution (CR) which provides 2026 funding the government expires on January 30. So far, only 3 of 12 Appropriations have been resolved. The House has had significant bi-partisan activity to reach funding deals on the remaining appropriations and the House has passed a "minibus" package for several agencies, which still needs Senate approval. There will be funding cuts to most budgets, and the House is including language to specify how the approved funding can be used, and requiring that the Administration include Congress in any plans for major agency reorganizations. Of course, these appropriations (and included "strings") still need to pass in the Senate. If the funding bills are passed by both the House and Senate, the question remains whether they will be signed into law by the Administration and in time to avoid another government shutdown after January 30.

Still at issue are the status of the ACA Tax Credits for those purchasing health insurance on the government exchanges and the growing bi-partisan concern regarding some domestic operations of Homeland Security. The later may postpone any final budget authority decision for that agency. If the all the appropriation bills cannot be passed by January 30, Congress would need to pass a CR to extend funding for the unresolved appropriations. After the recent 42-day government shutdown, most in Congress do not have an appetite for another shutdown/showdown.

**Saving the Civil Service Act H.R. 492 / S.134:** This bill would restore the integrity of an independent civil service from the recent attempts to expand "at will" employees within the government workforce. Thankfully, our 2 Senators (Kaine and Warner) and our House Representatives (Walkinshaw, Beyer, and Subramanyam) are all either Sponsors or Co-

sponsors of this bill. In the near future, OPM will be issuing its final rule on the creation of Schedule P/C (formerly known as Schedule F). HR492/SB134 would override any Schedule P/C rules which would create a partisan Civil Service.

**Equal COLA Act - H.R. 491 /S. 624** – Again, thanks to our local House Members and Senator Kaine for providing for their sponsorship or co-sponsorship of this bill, which would apply the same percent of COLA to a FERS annuity as is applied to a CSRS Annuity. For 2026, CSRS annuitants received a 2.8% COLA while FERS annuitants only received a 2% COLA on their annuity.



**Virginia Legislation**– General Assembly commences their “long” session January 14. Governor Elect Abigail Spanberger will be sworn in as Governor on January 17. **SB7: Repeal of the Sunset for Enhanced Standard Deduction Levels:** – this bill would permanently increase the State’s Standard Deduction. Currently, the temporary State Standard Deduction is \$8,750 Single and \$17,500 Joint Filers. However, if no other action is taken, for 2027 the Virginia State Standard Deduction would revert back to \$3,000 Single and \$6,000 for Joint Filers. This bill was included in our 2026 VFN State Legislative Plan. Hopefully this bill will make it out of Committee and head for a floor vote.

### **Federal Retirement Annuity Information -**

**OPM Form 1099R:** OPM has updated its delivery policy for the 1099-R form. Annuitants who have provided OPM an email address will receive their 1099-R forms electronically, unless they opt to receive them by mail by updating their PROFILE in OPM’s Services Online account. Individuals without internet or computer access should contact OPM’s Retirement Services to request a mailed copy of their 1099-R form. Annuitants can change their delivery preference by visiting their Retirement Services Online account at [www.opm.gov/rso](http://www.opm.gov/rso) or by calling the Retirement Services hotline at 1-888-767-6738 to request a mailed copy.

Your 2026 Annuity Adjustment Form can be obtained through OPM’s Services Online, or by request to OPM’s Retirement Office at 1-888-767-6738 or [retire@opm.gov](mailto:retire@opm.gov). NARFE HQ advised that OPM will mail this information to annuitants who have not provided OPM with an email address. The mailing (which is delayed) should be received by early February.

For both the Annuity Adjustment Form and the OPM 1099R, OPM’s phone lines are open from 7:30 am to 7:45 pm (Eastern Standard Time). These lines are very busy, so you should call early in the morning or after 5:00 pm when the phone lines are less busy. Remember to pack your patience – and PLEASE thank (and recruit to NARFE) the federal employee who helps you.



**The 71st Annual Virginia Federation of NARFE Conference** will be held April 13 – 15, 2026 in Harrisonburg, VA. Join federal employees, retirees, advocates, and leaders from across the

Commonwealth as we unite under the theme “Your Voice, Your Future, Our Mission.” The Conference will be held at the Hotel Madison, 710 S. Main Street, Harrisonburg, VA 22801. The hotel booking link is: <https://reservations.travelclick.com/110365?groupID=4711158> The room block will be active until March 11th, 2026 (3/11/2026). The 2026 Registration is \$125 and includes full conference, welcome reception, conference banquet, two lunches, and several generous AM/PM snack breaks, access to all sessions, workshops, and presentations. There will be a karaoke night for fun and fellowship and a hospitality room, open at designated times for relaxed conversation, refreshments, and networking. Registration forms and information will be forthcoming so watch the website at <https://www.narfe.org/va/conference> Please consider attending the conference.



## IN MEMORIAM



**Pat Drobnek** passed away on December 20, 2025 at the age of 74. Pat spent her first few years in Princeton, NJ but then her family moved to Hamilton, NJ. She received her undergrad degree in Political Science at Bucknell University in Lewisburg, PA. and received her MBA from George Washington University in Washington, DC. Upon graduation she briefly ended up at IRS as an auditor but then transitioned into budget analysis where she spent the bulk of her career. She worked downtown for a number of years until IRS moved to Maryland. She retired in 2007. Pat was our chapter’s second vice president for a number of years, attended chapter meetings and took part in Board meetings. She was also active in LLI’s Mystery Book Group, the Democratic Party, taught ESL, and helped prepare immigrants for citizenship tests, just to name a few things. There will be no services in the DC area; she will be buried in Hamilton, NJ beside her parents. Her obituary can be found on the website for Knotts Funeral Home at [knottscolonialfuneralhome.com](http://knottscolonialfuneralhome.com); you can leave comments for the family on the website.

### Useful Facts:

- **USPS Postal Dating** - In the future the official US Postal Service date stamp will be when it goes through the automatic sorter rather than when received by the Post Office. This could be very important with voting by mail and other “mail by” deadlines. Don’t delay!
- **Laws Effective January 1, 2026**
  - **Minimum Wage**: Increases to \$12.77/hour, with annual adjustments tied to inflation.
  - **Social Media for Minors**: Under-16s limited to one hour daily per platform, requiring platforms to enforce age verification.
  - **Baby Food Safety**: New "Baby Food Protection Act" mandates testing for heavy metals (arsenic, lead, mercury, cadmium) with QR code disclosure.

- **Unemployment Benefits**: Weekly benefits increase by \$52.
- **Telemarketing**: Solicitors limited to calling between 8 a.m. and 9 p.m. unless prior consent is given.
- **Healthcare**: Insurance must cover breast cancer screenings; some medical debt relief measures.
- **Fentanyl Screening**: Hospitals must include fentanyl tests in urine drug screens for diagnostic purposes (Malcolm's Law).
- **Court Fines**: Courts must provide itemized statements for traffic/criminal fines.
- Effective January 1, 2026, the primary change in Fairfax County was in the implementation of a new **4% Food and Beverage Tax** (meals tax). This new local tax is applied to prepared food and beverages sold as meals at restaurants, cafes, food trucks, and similar establishments, in addition to the existing 6% state sales tax, for a combined tax rate of approximately 10% on dining out.
- CareFirst Blue Cross Blue Shield offers two free wellness sessions to federal employees and annuitants for January and February 2026.
  - Thursday, January 29th 12PM-1PM **Setting Your Wellness Resolutions and Goals**  
<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/abbwuG5HRWGArSJM5y7cVQ#/registration>
  - Thursday, February 26th 12PM-1PM **Be Stroke Smart**  
<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/a2c39qTHQNSePflG5ZWflg#/registration>