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## NARFE Communication Platforms: Bigger and Brighter in 2020

By Barbara Sido, Executive Director

**H**appy new year, and welcome to the first issue of *NARFE Insider* in 2020. Over the course of the past two years, we've been talking a lot about change. From the rebranding initiative to the new AMS to recent legislative victories, NARFE has embraced the challenges and opportunities that come with change to better represent and serve the federal community. Strategic efforts incorporating change will continue this year, with one of the more noticeable projects focused on communication.

At agency health fairs and benefits presentations, active federal employees often tell us that they've never heard of NARFE. Our own internal analysis shows that a major reason for this has to do with content—not a lack of substance but rather a lack of access to it.

While NARFE is not in the news industry, and we don't have journalists on staff to break the news of the day, the unique and award-winning content in *NARFE Magazine* is a powerful tool that has informed and advised millions of readers. However, because it's a print-only publication, the magazine's invaluable articles, guidance and updates have not been able to reach broader audiences and inform new stakeholders.

NARFE Staff Vice President of Communications, Marketing and Membership Helen Mosher will lead what we call NARFE's "pivot to digital," which will include optimizing magazine articles for web visibility, creating dynamic educational resources, and developing a brand new user-friendly and technologically advanced website.

The new website is a massive undertaking that will require countless hours of back-end architecture, content cataloging and software integration—all of which is necessary for NARFE to provide enhanced customer support, greater accessibility among multiple viewing platforms, and a more customized user experience. After conducting a thorough RFP process late last year, we retained the services of a leading website design and digital marketing firm in the Washington, DC area that will help us bring our vision to life.

Do not fret—*NARFE Magazine* will continue to be printed and mailed to members. But the days of having two very different and somewhat confusing websites for the public and for members will come to an end. So, too, will the missed opportunities to better engage with current members, appeal to prospective members, and serve as a highly effective online resource for the public and press.

If the past is any predictor, focusing on how NARFE communicates will continue to yield tremendous success. Efforts to expand NARFE's social media presence last year have attracted thousands of new followers and generated many engaged discussions. We are eager to apply the same passion, drive and knowledge to this next round of communication updates, and we look forward to sharing our progress along the way.



# NARFE Officer Portal Webinar Series

By Johann DeCastro, Staff Vice President, Finance and Administration

**N**ARFE will offer training webinars to orient users to the features of the MX-Officer Portal. These webinars will include training for the portal dashboard, such as where to find key information, how to change data and how to export the data into Excel worksheets.

Dashboard data is updated every 12 hours so that MX-Officer Portal users have the latest information to support their needs. Information and available actions on the dashboard of the portal include:

- Chapter and federation member lists
- Chapter and federation listings
- Access to reports
- Adding and removing officers
- Exporting data to Excel for analysis

The webinars follow a schedule of alternating weeks for chapter and federation officer training. Pick the date that's most relevant and convenient for you. There will be time at the end of each webinar for questions.

**Webinar schedule:** All training webinars are from 2-3 p.m. EST.

## Chapter Training

- Wednesday, February 19
- Thursday, March 5
- Wednesday, March 25

## Federation Training

- Tuesday, February 25
- Wednesday, March 11
- Tuesday, March 31

Additionally, below is a link to the last webinar offered on the officer portal. Please view the link at your convenience.

AMS Training link: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=qXgl9JlcWUE&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qXgl9JlcWUE&feature=youtu.be)

# NARFE's Premier National Conference—FEDcon20

By Jennifer Bialek, Director, New Business Development & Events

**P**lanning is well underway for NARFE's national conference, FEDcon20, which will be held at the Westin Kierland Resort and Spa in Scottsdale, AZ from August 30 to September 1, 2020. This premier event takes NARFE's mission to the next level with leadership workshops and education sessions.

Designed to appeal to NARFE leaders, members and nonmembers alike, attendees will enjoy a fast-paced, two-and-a-half days of thought-provoking speakers, legislative updates, leadership and advocacy training, intensive benefit education, and the opportunity to engage and connect with old friends and new federal colleagues.

In addition to several inspirational keynote speakers, FEDcon20 offers more than 20 breakout sessions specifically focused on federal benefits, legislative issues, chapter and leadership development, and recruitment. There are numerous opportunities for federation and chapter leaders to



meet and share best practices. The program includes dedicated sessions that allow chapter officers to expand their leadership skills and come away with practical knowledge to share with members.

### NARFE experts will deliver

- Best practices and leadership development to enhance the federal community’s contributions at the local level.
- Practical, easy-to-understand information to ensure that you capitalize on your federal benefits and leave nothing on the table at retirement **and** beyond.
- A close inspection of legislation and policies threatening the security of current and retired feds—and what you can do about it.

FEDCon20 sets the stage for a one-of-a-kind forum celebrating the selfless dedication of America’s civil servants.

### NARFE’s FEDcon20 is for

- All Feds who want to maximize the value of their benefits and future annuity.
- All NARFE members ready to fully benefit from their membership.
- Any NARFE leaders engaged in chapter and leadership development.
- Members of the federal community, NARFE leaders and novices alike, who want to influence policy and take action to protect and enhance their earned benefits.
- Feds who want to safeguard their financial future and avoid post-retirement financial pitfalls.

### FEDcon20 Registration Rates

2020 DATES	MEMBER	NONMEMBER	SUPPLIER	DAY
Early Bird February 3–March 31	\$165	\$230	\$350	\$120
Regular April 1–August 30	\$190	\$250	\$350	\$120
On Site August 30–September 1	\$220	\$285	\$350	\$120

NARFE’s Annual Business Meeting will be held at 9 a.m., August 30, 2020, at the Westin Kierland Resort and Spa.

Keep tabs on the latest FEDcon20 information as it becomes available by visiting [www.narfe.org/fedcon20](http://www.narfe.org/fedcon20).

## Proposed Dues Increase

**I**n 2021, NARFE will mark its centennial anniversary. As we reach that milestone, we celebrate the progress we have made in becoming a modern, effective, well-governed association that provides valuable benefits and resources to the people who make us one of the greatest organizations—NARFE members.

In the past decade, NARFE has created opportunities that add substantial value for individual members, worked to reshape the perception of the importance of federal workers, and had a significant positive impact on legislation that affects the federal community. In that time, NARFE has

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worked hard to create value without increasing member dues. But we have reached the point where we need to ask our members to pay a little more to fulfill our mission and continue to serve all of our members. As a result, a dues increase proposal is planned to be on the August ballot.

With a dues increase of eight dollars, NARFE will continue to provide answers and protect your benefits in the following ways, and more.

- **NARFE webinars:** Starting in 2015 with our first two presentations, NARFE's now-monthly webinars provide valuable information that helps you save money, time and worry. More than 50,000 people have viewed the live presentations. Views of the recorded presentations top that number.
- **Federal Benefits Institute:** By raising the association's profile and investing in our on-staff federal benefits experts, NARFE has solidly branded itself as the "Federal Benefits Experts." The knowledge that an answer is just an email or phone call away is priceless.
- **NARFE Magazine:** This publication continues to be a valuable resource for members. Refocusing the content to offer articles that address the federal community's concerns and provide it with actionable information has expanded NARFE's reputation as the go-to resource.
- **Advocacy:** NARFE continues to be one of the most respected voices on Capitol Hill. NARFE's advocacy team provides Congress with the tactical information that it needs to make the best decisions on legislation that affects the federal community. NARFE's significant impact has kept recent budgets from taking funds out of Feds' pockets, enhanced and protected federal benefits, pushed for movement on stalled bills affecting the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP), and more.
- **Publicity and branding:** NARFE is in the spotlight more often thanks to having a staff member dedicated to distributing NARFE's successes and information to the media, resulting in national coverage of NARFE's effectiveness in protecting the federal community. NARFE's new logo and branding materials provide a modern look and increased relevance with all stakeholders.

NARFE members and the federal community are the sole reason for NARFE. We must be able to meet your needs and expectations and be at the top of our game when it comes to fighting for your earned pay and benefits.



## ADVOCACY

# NARFE Celebrates 2019 Legislative Success!

By Seth Ickes, Grassroots Assistant

2019 was an exceptional year for NARFE's legislative priorities. Through aggressive lobbying and the support of its members, NARFE achieved several legislative victories that made a difference in the lives of millions of current and retired members of the federal community. The organization defeated proposals that threatened to cut billions from federal benefits, improved pay rates and enhanced benefits for civil servants, and protected the integrity of agency functions on which federal employees and retirees rely.

### Here are some highlights from 2019:

- NARFE played a leading role in blocking the administration's misguided OPM reorganization plan, advancing important compromise language that both chambers of Congress supported. As a result of NARFE's efforts, the president signed into law a bill that stopped the OPM reorganization plan from advancing at least until 180 days after a year-long study detailing the challenges facing OPM and recommending solutions.

- Thanks to NARFE’s hard work and the advocacy of its members, presidential budget proposals to eliminate or reduce cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) for all current and future retirees were defeated; along with other proposals, the budget plan included over \$177 billion in cuts to benefits, none of which became law.
- NARFE worked tirelessly to pass a 3.1 percent average federal pay raise for 2020—a 2.6 percent across-the-board increase and a 0.5 percent average increase in locality rates. The raise, the largest in a decade, keeps pace with average private-sector increases and achieves parity with military salary increases.
- NARFE secured 12 weeks of paid parental leave for federal employees by working with a coalition of stakeholders and members of Congress.
- NARFE joined with congressional allies to pass into law the Government Employee Fair Treatment Act of 2019, which guarantees back pay for those furloughed during last year’s 35-day shutdown and those furloughed in all future government shutdowns.

[Click here](#) to read the complete details of NARFE’s 2019 legislative accomplishments.

## NARFE Launches GOTV 2020 Resource Center

By Marsha Padilla-Goad, Grassroots Program Manager

Election Day 2020 kicks off with early primaries and caucus schedules in Iowa, New Hampshire, Nevada and South Carolina. From now until Election Day, NARFE is focused on a nonpartisan get-out-the-vote (GOTV) program to encourage its members, employees, families and community members to participate in the political process. As NARFE leaders, you are a critical part of this effort.

Nonpartisan GOTV programs have become increasingly popular over the last several years. Despite recent predictions that Election Day will see historical highs in voter turnout, studies by the [Census Bureau](#), [Pew Research Center](#) and others still show a growing number of eligible voters choosing to sit on the sidelines. There are many variables that contribute to voter apathy; however, the significant differences in voter registration laws by state are the primary driver behind voter behavior. These challenges also influence GOTV programs. Each state has the power to regulate its electoral process; therefore, no state, or even election administration within states, conducts elections in exactly the same way.

To mitigate some of these challenges, NARFE’s advocacy department has compiled state-specific voter requirements and other essential electoral resources into its GOTV 2020 Resource Center. Voters can access their state’s voter registration forms, identification laws and requirements, important election dates and deadlines, polling locations, and more. Visit the resource center at [www.narfe.org/GOTV2020](http://www.narfe.org/GOTV2020). NARFE encourages federations and chapters to share this important Election Day resource with their communities. Please contact us at [advocacy@narfe.org](mailto:advocacy@narfe.org) if you have any questions or need additional details.

The screenshot shows the NARFE GOTV 2020 Resource Center website. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links for Home, Federal Benefits Institute, Advocacy, Membership, Events, and Communications. Below the navigation is a header with the NARFE logo and the text 'National Active and Retired FEDERAL EMPLOYEES Association'. The main content area is titled 'Are you ready for the 2020 elections?' and 'GET OUT THE VOTE! IT'S YOUR VOICE. IT'S YOUR VOICE. YOUR VOICE MATTERS!'. There are several call-to-action buttons: 'DONATE TO NARFE PROGRAMS', 'FIND NARFE ON FACEBOOK', 'JOIN NOW!', and 'RENEW NOW!'. The page also contains text about voter registration requirements and deadlines.

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# NARFE-PAC in 2020

By Ross Apter, Political Associate

It's officially 2020, and the congressional elections are just around the corner. NARFE-PAC has plenty of work to do leading up to November 3. But first, let's reflect on 2019 and NARFE-PAC's progress thus far.

## NARFE-PAC has set the following goals for the 2019-20 cycle:

- Raise \$1.75 million in member contributions.
- Disburse \$1.25 million for political purposes.
- Send NARFE members to 110 local events.
- Increase monthly contributors (sustainers) by 20 percent.



As of the end of 2019, NARFE-PAC raised \$1,043,182, disbursed \$616,000, sent NARFE members to 64 local fundraisers and increased the sustainer program by 17 percent. NARFE-PAC needs the continued support of NARFE members to make sure the PAC stays strong enough to fight for the federal community this year. Thank you to everyone who has supported the PAC and has encouraged their members to do so, too.

March is NARFE-PAC month, a time dedicated to strengthening NARFE-PAC and spreading the word about its important work. Encourage your fellow NARFE

members to contribute to the PAC, and be on the lookout for more information about March in upcoming correspondence. It will be here before you know it.

Now, let's talk 2020. The pace is going to pick up this year, so let's preview what NARFE members should expect.

For starters, primary season is only weeks away. While much of the political focus in the country has been on the presidential election, NARFE-PAC is concentrating on the congressional elections and getting to know those candidates. NARFE federations and chapters are encouraged to invite candidates to speak at NARFE events. Remember, NARFE is a nonpartisan organization, so be sure to afford all candidates the opportunity to speak at events.

NARFE-PAC will create a congressional candidate questionnaire that will be posted on the NARFE-PAC website and emailed to NARFE-PAC leaders when it becomes available. Completed questionnaires allow NARFE and its members to understand where the *candidates* stand on our issues. The questionnaire should not be sent to incumbents; we have the NARFE voting scorecard to show us their positions. Returning a completed questionnaire is a requirement for new candidates to be considered for a NARFE-PAC disbursement.

Should the NARFE-PAC process move forward with a candidate, NARFE-PAC will schedule a meeting to find out more about his or her positions on NARFE issues. NARFE-PAC will also work with the candidate to make sure that he or she reaches out to federation leadership so that a relationship can be established with local members.

Campaign season moves quickly, so NARFE-PAC needs to hear from federations about candidates via the NARFE-PAC consultative process. The PAC relies on feedback from NARFE members through the federation NARFE-PAC recommendations. Please reply swiftly if you receive a recommendation request email.

NARFE leaders play an integral part in identifying, understanding and forming relationships with candidates running for Congress. You have a vital role in the NARFE-PAC process and will help the PAC achieve its goal of bolstering the federal community. This is a crucial year for NARFE members, and there is plenty of progress to be made.

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As a final note, here are a few reminders about NARFE-PAC that you may find helpful should you get questions from members or candidates:

- NARFE-PAC is only involved in congressional races, not the presidential race or state-level races.
- NARFE-PAC and NARFE do not endorse candidates.
- Completing a candidate questionnaire does not guarantee a disbursement.
- Requests from candidates for a NARFE-PAC disbursement should be forwarded to [advocacy@narfe.org](mailto:advocacy@narfe.org).

Want to contribute to NARFE-PAC online? Quickly do so [here](#). Please contact [rapter@narfe.org](mailto:rapter@narfe.org) if you have any questions about NARFE-PAC.

## How Will You Advocate in 2020?

By Marsha Padilla-Goad, Grassroots Program Manager

Several times a year, members of Congress take scheduled breaks from their duties in Washington, DC to work in their districts back home. These breaks, referred to as congressional recesses or district work periods, are opportunities for legislators to hear from their constituents about the issues most important to them. During recesses, legislators' schedules are jam-packed with in-person meetings, town hall meetings and other community events. And because 2020 is an election year, members of Congress are expected to be busier than ever, looking for ample opportunities to connect with voters.

Election years are particularly constructive for NARFE advocates. In addition to engaging with members of Congress, they also have the opportunity to meet with and educate congressional candidates. During these interactions, NARFE advocates can raise lawmakers' and candidates' awareness of NARFE's issues and push for their support on Capitol Hill.



NARFE advocates should start planning now by accessing the 2020 [congressional calendar](#) and reviewing the dates that members of Congress are scheduled to be back in their home district or state. Advocates should become familiar with [NARFE's legislative priorities](#) and use NARFE's state-specific [Federal Family Fact Sheets](#) to further educate lawmakers about the federal community. And we urge them to share [feedback](#) about their meetings and events with NARFE. This feedback helps us

plan effective follow-up strategies that we can institute once legislators return to Capitol Hill.

In a [study](#) conducted by the Congressional Management Foundation, congressional staffers said that in-person visits from constituents are the most influential way to communicate with a senator or representative who is undecided on an issue. In fact, the study reported that members of the House consider keeping in touch with constituents to be the most important aspect of their jobs. With this in mind, we encourage NARFE advocates to prioritize scheduling in-person meetings when planning in-district advocacy activities. However, we also want advocates to engage in the ways that are most comfortable for them.

### How to be an advocate

The following are activities that NARFE advocates can engage in throughout the year:

- NARFE conducts ongoing grassroots campaigns. Visit the NARFE [Legislative Action Center](#) and choose a topic that impacts you the most. You can access and edit a sample letter to reflect your personal story, and then send it directly to your lawmaker's inbox.
- Organize a group to represent NARFE at town hall meetings, constituent coffee hours and other community events hosted by your legislator. Members of Congress schedule these events

throughout the year, and the dates and times are usually made available on their websites. Visit [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) or [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) to find legislators' official websites.

- Invite legislators/candidates to speak at your chapter meeting. This is a great opportunity to have an intimate conversation about issues affecting the federal community.
- Consider hosting a [candidate forum](#). Invite both candidates competing to represent your district or state and engage them on the priorities of federal civil servants.
- Write [letters to the editor](#). When asked about effective advocacy strategies directed at their offices back home, 80 percent of congressional staffers said letters to the editor in hometown newspapers have a lot of influence.
- Engage with legislators on social media. The Congressional Management Foundation survey revealed that staffers think Facebook and Twitter have become very important in communicating lawmakers' views.

NARFE's advocacy team is prepared for an aggressive year of lobbying and grassroots advocacy. Among our priorities for 2020 are the Fair COLA for Seniors Act, H.R. 1553, which would provide more accurate cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs), and a Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) reform solution that brings much needed financial relief to WEP-affected retirees.

Thank you in advance for your advocacy.



## NARFE FEDERAL BENEFITS INSTITUTE

# A Look at Federal Benefit Changes in 2020

By James Marshall

The new year brings changes to the federal benefits on which employees and retirees rely. Below is a recap of all the changes for 2020. Should you have any questions, please contact NARFE's federal benefits experts at [fedbenefits@narfe.org](mailto:fedbenefits@narfe.org).

## Retirement Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA)

- 1.6 percent (CSRS, eligible FERS annuitants and Social Security recipients)

## Social Security Maximum Taxable Wage Base: \$137,700

- A credit is earned with \$1,410 of work income
- 4 credits if \$5,640 is earned

## Social Security Earnings Test

- The retirement earnings test applies only to people below [normal retirement age \(NRA\)](#). Social Security withholds benefits if your earnings exceed a certain level, called a retirement earnings test exempt amount, and if you are under your NRA.
- \$18,240 (\$1 reduction applied for every \$2 earned above this wage limit. This is the same earnings limit for the FERS retirement annuity supplement.)
- \$48,600 special limit during the year of full retirement age (\$1 reduction applied for every \$3 earned above this wage limit.)



## High Deductible Health Plans

- Maximum deductible: \$1,400 (Self Only) or \$2,800 (Self and Family/Self Plus One)

- HSA contributions: \$3,550 (Self Only) or \$7,100 (Self and Family/Self Plus One)
- Maximum out-of-pocket: \$6,900 (Self Only) or \$13,500 (Self and Family/Self Plus One)
- 55+ Catch-up contributions: \$1,000

## 2020 Medicare Part B Premiums

- Most participants will pay Part B premiums of \$144.60 per month. Please refer to the chart in the January issue of *NARFE Magazine* (page 18) for a complete look at Medicare premiums in 2020.

## Flexible Spending Account (FSA) Limits for Employees

- HCFSAs (health care FSA): \$2,750 per individual
- DCFSAs (dependent care FSA): \$5,000 per household, or \$2,500 if married, filing separately

## 2020 TSP Contribution Limits

- \$19,500 (regular TSP-1 contribution)
- \$6,500 (catch-up TSP-1-C contribution)



## PUBLIC RELATIONS

# NARFE in the News

Each issue of *NARFE Insider* features selections of major media and occasionally local news coverage generated by chapters and federations. The end of 2019 brought a number of legislative surprises to the federal workforce. From paid parental leave to a pay increase to the blockage of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) merging with the General Services Administration (GSA), NARFE experts shared insight and perspective on the effects to the broader federal community with print, digital and broadcast journalists. Take a look below at recent media outreach activities.

## Preparing for 2020

### *FEDtalk*

\*Interview features NARFE Staff Vice President of Policy and Programs Jessica Klement  
January 13, 2020

## Retiree COLAs vs. Workers Pay Raise: Why the Difference?

### *Federal News Network: The Causey Report*

\*Features mention of NARFE President Ken Thomas and NARFE's advocacy work with regard to retiree COLAs

January 3, 2020

## NAPA's review of the Office of Personnel Management

### *Government Matters*

\*Features Jessica Klement, NARFE Staff Vice President of Policy and Programs

December 29, 2019

## Congress Agrees to 3.1% Federal Pay Raise in 2020 Spending Bill

### *Federal News Network*

\*Article features NARFE National President Ken Thomas



December 16, 2019

## White House, Democrats Reach Deal to Provide Paid Family Leave to Feds

Govexec

\*Article features NARFE National President Ken Thomas

December 10, 2019

# Webinars for the Federal Community



## UPCOMING WEBINARS:

February 13, 2 p.m. EST

- ▶ Understanding the FERS Basic Benefit

February 27, 2 p.m. EST

- ▶ Smart TSP Strategies to Build a Strong Financial Future



Always FREE for NARFE members. To register, go to [NARFE.org/Institute](https://www.narfe.org/institute).



NARFE FEDERAL BENEFITS INSTITUTE

**More questions?** Call or email NARFE's federal benefits specialists for one-on-one help. **All FREE for members. Not a member?** Join NARFE today at [NARFE.org/Join](https://www.narfe.org/join)

## *NARFE Insider* is posted on the website at [www.NARFE.org](https://www.narfe.org)

The following members receive *NARFE Insider* for NARFE Leaders: Officer codes 1-Chapter President, 2-Chapter Vice President, 3-Chapter Secretary, 4-Chapter Treasurer, 5-Chapter Secretary/Treasurer, 6-Chapter Legislative Officer/National, 7-Chapter Membership Chair, 8-Chapter Public Relations, 9-Chapter Service Officer, 11-Chapter Editor, 12-Chapter Alzheimer's Chair, 13-Chapter NARFE-PAC Officer, 14-Chapter Financial Secretary, 15-Chapter Other, 16-Chapter Net Coordinator, 17-Chapter Legislative Officer/State, 20-Federation President, 21-Federation Executive Vice President, 22-Federation Vice President, 23-Federation Secretary, 24-Federation Treasurer, 25-Federation Secretary/Treasurer, 26-Federation Legislative Chair/National, 28-Federation Legislative Chair/State, 29-Federation PR, 31-Federation Service Officer, 33-Federation Membership Chair, 34-Federation Editor, 35-Federation Alzheimer's Chair, 36-Federation NARFE-PAC Coordinator, 37-Federation Immediate Past President, 38-Federation Other, 39-Federation Executive Committee, 40-Pre-Retirement Speaker, 41-Federation Net Coordinator, 42-FEEA Coordinator, 43-Federation Area Officer, 44-Regional Alzheimer's Coordinator, 45-Regional FEEA Coordinator, 49-Regional Vice President, 50-Immediate Past Regional Vice President, 51-National Officer, 52-Past National Officer