

WINTER NEWSLETTER FOR ALL TO ENJOY

PRESIDENT'S CORNER: After a runoff election, Ken Thomas, of Florida, was elected NARFE President. He joins Kathleen Hensley, who was elected NARFE Secretary-Treasurer on the first ballot. Only 7% of NARFE membership bothered to vote.

On the national stage, the midterm elections returned the House of Representatives to Democrat control. Many sources predict legislative gridlock for the next two years, which could be good news. Historically, Democrats have been supportive of the Federal community, meaning that the Administration's plans for cutting benefits and agency reorganizations, barring calamity, may be on hold for the next two years.

IN MEMORIAM: Once again, we are happy to report that no deaths were officially reported this quarter, but only two for the entire year? Perhaps there were deaths among the cohorts who were transferred to National. A quick look at the 19 Members who were dropped for non-payment of dues shows 10 memberships dating back 20-30 years ago when NARFE was primarily for retirees. VP Tom Geronikos is investigating how many of those have actually deceased.

MAJOR ISSUES: Postal Reform. The USPS Task Force has made recommendations. Projections are that USPS health funds will be depleted in 12 years. Unfortunately, the Medicare requirement hasn't been scrapped. Recommendations have been made for restructuring pre-funding requirements and re-amortization of payments with new actuarial calculations, eliminating bargaining over compensation, and moving toward a defined contribution retirement system.

Membership Loss: The loss of Members to National appears to have largely abated. However, Members who have 3-year, 2-year, or annual renewals will still be targeted for inadvertent transfer. The renewal forms are deceptive: (1) you have to look hard for the section to renew Chapter 404 membership and (2) don't fall for the "Renew for just \$40 "(that's only for National dues) but you must remit \$44.00 (for the \$4.00 Chapter dues) to ensure you retain Chapter 404 membership.

PA Federation VP Zuck encourages automatic dues withholding to ensure retaining Chapter 404 membership. We concur. It's easy to set up between OPM and your bank, using the application form in each issue of the NARFE magazine. It's safe and only a \$3.67 monthly allotment from your pension so you won't have to cut a check and

complete a renewal form every 1,2, or 3 years and you won't risk being dropped for non-payment if you lost or forgot the dues notice.. You can terminate anytime, otherwise it continues until OPM notifies NARFE of your passing. Finally, you may also get a discount that will cover your Chapter 404 dues for the first year.

Government Shutdown: Somewhat of a misnomer. Only 25% is not funded. Most critical functions are funded and operating (defense, retirement, etc.), however some non-critical functions; e.g., USDA food safety inspectors, are becoming problematic. Though deemed non-critical, you'll still have to file and pay taxes (you'll still get refunds). Restoration measures have been introduced in Congress that NARFE supports, but are delayed by the standoff. However, some 800,000 employees are directly affected hoping their savings will last until pay is restored. Shutdown information is available on the NARFE website, or by calling 1-800-456-8410, Option 2.

THIS N' THAT: Retiree COLA increase for 2019 is 2.8% for CSRS and 2% for FERS. Employee pay has been frozen for FY19 by E.O. dated 12/28/18. Medicare Part B premiums will increase to \$134 for those not covered by hold harmless provisions of law. New withdrawal options for TSP are scheduled to be effective this coming September; TSP guidance you may have received in the mail applies to the current withdrawal situation.

EVENTS: The Chapter participated in two events after publication of the Fall 2018 Newsletter.

On October 9th the Chapter held a combined meeting with Media Chapter 1940 at its venue in Brookhaven. Following the business sessions, a Congressional forum was held for the vacant 5thCD House seat to which both major-party candidates were invited. Republican candidate Pearl Kim presented her bio as PA Deputy Attorney-General, indicated her support for all government employees, and answered some prepared questions from the Chapter Presidents and at-large questions from the Chapters' Members. She was given a package of NARFE-approved position papers for her possible future reference. Democrat candidate Mary Scanlon was unable to attend, citing a schedule conflict (she eventually won the election).

On October 18th, the Chapter ran a recruiting table at a senior expo in Essington. Application materials were handed out to 6 prospects expressing interest; that exceeded the total of zero such expressions at a prior expo.

On December 19th, the Chapter held its Holiday luncheon at Perkins Family Restaurant in Drexel Hill. Vince DuGuilio and Bob Lammer won cash door prizes.

MEETINGS: Winter regular Chapter meetings will be held in the Springfield municipal building at 1:00 pm on January 16th, February 20th and March 20th.