Chapter 1201 Monthly Meetings
When: Third Monday every month except second Monday in January and February
Time: 10:00 - 11:00 a.m. (Business Meeting) 11:15 a.m. - Noon (Program Speaker)
Place: Eunice Activity Center, 1000 Eunice Street, Arlington, Texas 76010

Ron Wright, U.S. Congressman for the 6th. District of Texas will be our guest speaker at the August 19th Chapter Meeting.

Our February 11th. meeting was on Federal Income Tax Planning. Chapter 1201 is fortunate to have these three members who are skilled in tax preparation.
Mr. James Reese of Tivity Health gave a presentation on Silver Sneakers at the March 18th chapter meeting.

Chapter member Roger Broom presented an excellent slide show on some of the local history that he researched for his new book, Barbecuing Dragons, a mystery novel of Fort Worth, Texas.

At the May 20th chapter meeting, Mr. Gene Bates of the Arlington Fire Department gave an excellent demonstration of cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) using only chest compressions.
Jessica Klement, NARFE Staff Vice President, Advocacy, presented “Protecting Your Benefits - Make the Most of Your Congressional Contacts”

Dorothy Creswell, presented an update on the new NARFE Association Management System, (AMS), and online resources.

Chapter 1201 members Geraldine Arnold, Elizabeth Curry, Dennis Gaster, Bernie Owen, and Ben Weiger attended the conference.

Programs
by Linda Heartley
Second Vice-President for Programs

July 15, 2019................. Carnegie Libraries in Texas by Laureen Jacobs
August 19, 2019............. Congressman Ron Wright U.S. District 6
September 16, 2019......... Broadway Show Tunes by Darrell McCallum (Invited)
October 21, 2019............ What You Don’t Know About Arthritis by Dr. Jason Kouri, Medical Director, Neuropathy & Pain Centers of Texas
November 18, 2019......... 2020 Federal Health Benefits by Kristine Scott, GEHA, and Bruce Harrison, BCBS
December 16, 2019,........ Annual Meeting, Installation of Officers, and Christmas Luncheon
NARFE OPPOSES OPM-GSA MERGER

National President Ken Thomas delivered a clear message in his testimony before Congress: Don’t reward lack of transparency, insufficient planning with fraught OPM-GSA merger.

President Thomas was a key speaker before the House Oversight and Reform Subcommittee on Government Operations regarding the proposed merger of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) with the General Services Administration (GSA).

During the hearing, Thomas reiterated that the administration has not provided the evidence to make a convincing case for the merger. He noted “the administration needs to explain how OPM’s remaining functions will receive the attention and resources they deserve.”

Lawmakers from both sides of the aisle echoed NARFE’s apprehension and expressed skepticism with the plan. Subcommittee Chairman Gerry Connolly, D-VA, argued that the proposal is “short-sighted, inadequate and un-compelling”, and that “the administration has not provided this committee with a clear and convincing reason for dismantling this key federal agency.”

Margaret Weichert, the deputy director of management for Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and acting director of OPM, argued in support of the merger, but did not address concerns over the lack of evidence and analysis to justify the plan.

A copy of Thomas’ full testimony is available on the NARFE website (narfe.org).

NARFE RETIREES ON TRACK FOR A SMALL 2020 COLA ADJUSTMENT

The modest upward living cost increase in the first four months of this year points to a modest January 2020 cost-of-living adjustment for federal, military and Social Security retirees. COLAS are based by urban living costs as measured by the Labor Department’s Consumer Price Index-W (CPI-W).

After 5 months — May, June, July, August and September— in the COLA countdown, the unofficial increase in January stands at 1.21%. But the actual amount of the increase, if any, will depend on the difference in the CPI for the third quarter — July, August and September — of 2019 over the CPI-W level for the third quarter of 2018. Living costs, as measured by CPI-W declined by 0.45 and 0.47 in November and December of last year.

Retirees linked to the CPI-W received a 2.8% increase in January of this year if they received military retirement, Social Security or Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) benefits. Retirees under the Federal Employees Retirement System program, are under a COLA formula, which kept their January adjustment to 2%.

NARFE believes that CPI-W is the wrong yardstick to measure the impact of inflation for retirees. NARFE advocates that a more equitable guideline would be the CPI-E (elderly), which takes into account the rate of inflation for medical and prescription expenses that consume a large part of retirees’ monthly income.
PRESIDENT TRUMP PROPOSES (ONCE AGAIN) A FEDERAL PAY FREEZE

With President Trump’s fiscal year 2020 (FY20) budget request to Congress proposing a federal employee pay freeze in 2020, NARFE National President Ken Thomas issued the following statement: “At a time when this administration touts a strong economy and private-sector wage growth, President Trump’s budget request to freeze federal employee pay in 2020 defies logic, exacerbates the federal government’s long-documented recruitment and retention challenges, and, quite frankly, shows nothing but disdain for millions of hard working public servants. I urge Congress to intervene and authorize a reasonable pay raise during the appropriations process.”

The President’s budget request also proposed cutting earned federal retirement benefits and increasing employee retirement contributions by six percent of pay. When combined with a pay freeze, increasing retirement contributions results in a six percent pay cut. Unlike proposals to cut federal retirement benefits and other aspects of the president’s budget, the federal pay freeze does not require congressional action.

In addition to the pay freeze and reductions to federal retirement benefits, the FY 2020 budget includes a (an):

- $845 billion cut to Medicare.
- $20 billion cut to Social Security. Disability Compensation will begin the date the claim is approved, not the date applied.
- 9% across the board decrease to social programs.

UPDATE - HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE APPROVES RAISE, REJECTS OPM-GSA MERGER

On June 3, the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government approved a spending bill that seeks to provide federal employees with a 3.1 percent average pay increase in 2020. The legislation would override the pay freeze proposal in the president’s fiscal year 2020 budget request. The proposed raise – a 2.6 percent increase across the board and a 0.5 percent average increase to locality pay rates – would be the largest in a decade and is based on the most recent annual change in private-sector pay measured by the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ Employment Cost Index.

Improved pay and benefits help preserve the government’s ability to recruit and retain top talent. The pay increase would give equitable compensation to more than two million current federal workers, many of whom are still feeling the effects of the 35-day government shutdown earlier this year. Matching private-sector pay increases enables the civil service to attract the best and brightest workers and stay viable in an increasingly competitive hiring climate. The pay increase would help government workers achieve parity with the military – a proposal to issue members of the military a 3.1 percent raise is on track for approval from the House and Senate Armed Services Committees. Please urge Congressman Ron Wright (6th Congressional District) to support a modest pay increase for federal employees in 2020.
The spending bill also rejects the administration’s proposal to essentially eliminate the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) as part of a broader government reorganization plan. No funds made available by the bill may be used to transfer any function or authority from OPM to the General Services Administration (GSA) or the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Members of both parties on the committee have expressed concerns with the proposal, due in large part to the administration’s inability to provide the necessary documents – such as detailed plans, workforce estimates, a cost-benefits analysis and evidence that the reorganization would make the government more efficient – to justify the merger and prove its effectiveness.

Moving OPM’s programmatic functions to GSA puts vital services, like federal retirement health care and insurance programs, at risk of not receiving the attention and resources they deserve. The proposal would also move OPM’s personnel policy functions to the Executive Office of the President, leaving it open to political influence and endangering a merit-based civil service.

**UPDATE, cont.**

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MEMBERSHIP REPORT
by Ben Weiger
1st. Vice President for Membership

Membership Activities from March 2019 to present

I attended the Texas Federation conference in Longview. I accepted the position as the TX Federation membership coordinator. In that position, I will be coordinating with other Texas chapters regarding potential assistance (i.e., recruitment materials, matching fund requests, post meeting reimbursement forms) with recruitment efforts at state/regional/national federal organization events. I will also write membership-related articles for the TFR.

At the conference in Longview, I had the opportunity to make a short presentation about membership recruitment and some of our chapter’s best practices in recruiting new members.

I followed up with the prospective members we met at the Arlington Aging Well Expo in February. First, I sent all the prospective members emails with NARFE information. I followed this up with personal phone calls for those who provided phone numbers. Several of these prospects may join our organization in the coming months. I left phone messages with many of the other prospects. I plan to follow-up to try and reach them directly. I will also be calling some prospects we met at the SW Rural Carriers Conference in Irving TX back in January.

I followed-up with the BSBC and GEHA representatives to determine if they have any presentations scheduled with federal agencies in the near future. The GEHA representative informed me that she has some wellness events in Dallas between June 20-22. I plan to follow-up with her shortly to determine the locations and coordinate with the Dallas chapters regarding potential recruitment events. The BSBC rep did not have any formal sessions scheduled at this time. These should pick up during the fall. I also met with an Aetna representative at the Texas Federation conference in Longview and I need to follow-up with her as well regarding their health insurance events. This will be a great opportunity for us to recruit new members throughout the year. We will also partner with the other chapters dependent on the locations of these health insurance events.
Opportunities for Recruitment/Retention

- Consider attending an annual Christmas party/luncheon at your current/former agency’s office in December.
- Consider attending a retirement luncheon/dinner for one your agency’s colleagues
- Consider giving a NARFE presentation to your current/former agency
- Consider giving a presentation about NARFE to your former agency’s retirement group.
- Consider giving your doctor’s office a copy of the NARFE magazine
- Carry extra membership applications with you (in purse, car, etc.)

If you would like to give a NARFE presentation to your current/former agency, or If you would like to help us recruit new members, please contact me at weigerben@gmail.com or 817-600-8638. Please contact me so I can send you membership applications to assist with your recruitment drive efforts. We also have membership applications available during our monthly meetings.

Ben Weiger
Membership Chair