



NARFE NEWSLETTER

GREATER BOWIE-CROFTON AREA CHAPTER 1747
National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association

Volume 38 No. 7

narfe.org/chapter1747

March 2020

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS are held at the Bowie Senior Center, 14900 Health Center Drive Bowie, 20716 in Room 4. Meeting dates are the third Thursday of the month at 10:00 AM except in July and August. There is never a charge to attend and all meetings are open to the public. Please check your current newsletter or our website for any changes.

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETINGS are held the first Thursday of the month at 10:00 AM in Conference Room 125, Bowie Senior Center. All chapter members are welcome.

POSTAL ADDRESS: NARFE Chapter 1747, P.O. Box 504, Bowie, MD 20718

NOTE: Chapter meetings are cancelled when Prince George's County schools are closed due to inclement weather. Otherwise, meetings are held as scheduled.

COMING ATTRACTIONS

- | | |
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| March 5 | Executive Board Meeting,
Bowie Senior Center, 10a-Noon |
| March 12 | Webinar, Federal Benefits Institute, 2:00p-Set
Your Retirement Goals and Plan the Process |
| March 17 | St. Patrick's Day |
| March 19 | General Meeting, Bowie Senior Center
10a-Noon, PG Sheriff's Office, Senior Scams |

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Passing of Jerry Kursban

Jerry Kursban, the President of Chapter 1747 from 2013 through 2017 passed away on February 26, 2020. Jerry was a passionate champion of NARFE and defender of Federal employee and retiree pay and benefits. Due to his leadership and dedication, Jerry was able to lead the chapter through uncertain times until a new president was found. The memorial service for Jerry will be held on March 22 at 1:00p at the Unitarian Universal Church located at 333 Dubois Rd, Annapolis, MD 21401.



Jerry Kursban and Gary Roundtree

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Frank Lee

The Tax Reform Act of 2017 made it difficult for many MD taxpayers to itemize on their MD tax return. As a result, many MD taxpayers paid more in Maryland taxes, the MD legislature got a windfall in increased revenue and MD taxpayers got an unintended tax increase because the MD legislature has refused to take action to allow MD taxpayers to itemize on their MD tax return if they take the standard deduction on their Federal return. House Bill 788 and Senate Bill 486 would fix this problem.

Senate Bill 278 would give senior citizens tax relief by making retirement income tax free in Maryland for those having an adjusted gross income of less than \$100,000. Please use the Legislative Action Center to contact your legislators to voice support for these bills.

The MD legislature is likely not to pass these measures in this year because they are looking for revenue to support the education changes recommended by the Kirwan Commission and don't want to support legislation that would reduce State revenue. We should continue to lobby for legislation to allow MD taxpayers to itemize on their MD tax return even if they take the standard deduction on their Federal return because it is the right thing to do. What the legislature did was an act of taxation without representation since MD taxpayers did not vote for a tax increase.

According to our State Legislative Chair, ED Bice, Virginia has taken action to allow VA taxpayers to itemize on their VA tax return even if they take the standard deduction on their Federal return and even returned the windfall back to VA taxpayers. The MD legislature should do the same.

In addition, we should continue to lobby for tax relief for seniors because MD is a high tax state and seniors on a fixed income need tax relief. Giving MD senior citizens tax relief would help the State by encouraging more seniors to remain in Maryland and keep their money in Maryland rather than move to a low tax State. We need to convince MD legislators of the benefits of providing tax relief to seniors.

February 20, 2020 General Meeting

I would like to thank everyone who attended the General Meeting at the Ledo Pizza restaurant on February 20. We had 39 attendees at the meeting. Attorney R. Anthony Pasciuto from Byrd & Byrd gave an excellent presentation

on estate planning with a lot of excellent questions from the audience. Tony explained the purpose of the documents which comprise an estate plan including a Will or Trust; a Health Care Power of Attorney; a Directive/Living Will, and a Durable General Power of Attorney. He also explained the difference between a will and a trust and described ways that you can distribute your assets through a will and beneficiary designations. Following the presentation, we were treated to a delicious meal of pizza, salad, chicken tenders and fries.

Future Recruitment Efforts

As a result of our recruitment efforts, a total of 10 new members have joined NARFE and Chapter 1747 since November 2019. The NARFE Fair is just the beginning of our recruitment drive. We plan to participate in other events including health fairs and pre-retirement seminars to recruit new members for NARFE and Chapter 1747. Our next recruiting event will be the Bowie Health Fair scheduled for April 25 in facilities on Hospital Drive. With many Federal employees retiring, we know that there are many potential NARFE members living in the Bowie area. We intend to reach out to them and get them to join NARFE. Please help us by telling your friends and family who are Federal employees and retirees about NARFE and ask them to come to our meetings to find out more about NARFE. Our Executive Board met with new members Betty Mayes, Bruce Thoman, Towanna Thompson, Gerald Williams, Alice Arnold, and Diane Henry at the Bowie Senior Center on Feb 6 to welcome them into our chapter and to find out more about their background, interests, and skills to see how they can play a significant role in our chapter. We learned that our new members had outstanding and diverse Federal careers and look forward to them playing a significant role in NARFE and Chapter 1747.

MD Federation Meeting

The MD Federation held a Federation Board Meeting at the Bowie Comfort Inn on Friday, February 7, 2020. The speakers were Major General Omar Jones, IV, the Commander of the U.S. Army Military District of Washington and Congressman David J. Trone of District 6. General Jones talked about his responsibilities as Commander of the U.S Army Military District of Washington, his family's deep roots in the D.C. area, and commended Federal employees and retirees for their public service. Congressman Trone talked on legislation that he was supporting including legislation to fight the Opioid epidemic, legislation to lower drug prices and increased funding for NIH. Dr. Sudha Haley, the MD Legislative Director said that NARFE accomplishments in 2019 included blocking the OPM Reorganization Plan, securing pay raises for Federal employees in 2019 and 2020 and providing paid parental leave for Federal employees. Dr. Haley also emphasized the importance of completing the Census form in 2020 so that jurisdictions will get all the Federal funds due them.

A total of 13 members from Chapter 1747 attended the meeting.



MEMBERSHIP CHAIR

Lillie Watson

The number of Chapter 1747 Members as of February 18, 2020 is 569. Updated activity reports on Chapter 1747 members are currently unavailable due to a system change.



FEDERAL LEGISLATION

Kent Nilsson

Recently, President Trump submitted a fiscal 2021 budget that takes direct aim at the earned pay and benefits of federal workers and retirees and further undermines other protections of federal employees and retirees. However you may feel about other issues separating our political parties, make no mistake: the next election will directly affect your economic interests, future and security. You ARE a target.

There are three election arenas in which the next battle will be fought: the congress, the senate, and the presidential election. NARFE has a political action committee that can funnel contributions where needed. If you want to contribute, go to <https://Narfe.org/narfepac> and make a contribution there. Please tell your congress person and senators how you feel about the issues that affect you. You can contact them directly on their websites. It strengthens NARFE's advocacy efforts if you let them know that you are a NARFE member, adding increased weight when NARFE visits. In addition, individual letters (i.e., not form letters) are particularly effective because politicians are sensitive to the time and effort that it takes to write a personalized letter. Further, there is strength in numbers. If you have opportunities to recruit NARFE members, please do so.

Below is an updated list of pending legislation, carried over from the first term of the 116th Congress, that may affect either active or retired employees or both.

H.R. 141/S.521 (Social Security Fairness Act of 2019). This bill repeals both the Government Pension Offset (GPO) and the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP). **Status:** H.R. 1521 was referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means on January 31, 2019. S. 521 was referred to the Senate Committee on Finance on February 14, 2019.

H.R. 3934 (Equal Treatment of Public Servants Act of 2019), Repeal of the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP): H.R. 3934 provides an immediate \$100/month payment to the primary worker turning 62 before 2022, and a \$50/month spousal benefit. H.R. 3934 includes a new formula for those turning 62 after 2022 through 2060 and provides that recipients receive either those payments or those under the new formula, whichever is higher. Annuitants who begin to receive payments after 2060 would only be entitled to payments under the new formula. **Status:** Referred to House Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Social Security on July 24, 2019.

H.R. 4540 (The Public Servants Protection and Fairness Act) would also repeal the WEP. H.R. 4540 provides an immediate \$150/month payment with no spousal payment. This bill uses the same formula for all annuitants receiving benefits after 2022 as H.R. 3934 but with no 2060 transition. NARFE supports both WEP bills. Not wanting to choose between them, NARFE asks that you support having Congress reconcile those bills. **Status:** Referred to House Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Social Security on September 27, 2019.

H.R. 1553 (Fair COLA for Seniors Act). This bill requires that COLA adjustments for seniors be calculated using the Consumer Price Index for the Elderly (CPI-E) instead of the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W). Proponents contend that the CPI-W does not account for the spending habits of seniors. For example, the cost of medical care has outpaced the cost of other consumer goods and services. And, on average, seniors spend almost twice that of the U.S. population as a whole. **Status:** Referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means, Veterans Affairs, Oversight and Reform, and Armed Forces Subcommittee on Disability and Memorial Affairs on March 29, 2019.

H.R. 2382/S.2965 (The USPS Fairness Act). These bills remove the requirement that the U.S. Postal Service fully pre-fund the future health benefits of its retirees. **Status:** H.R. 2382 passed the House and was received by the Senate on February 10, 2020. S. 2965 was referred to the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs on December 3, 2019.

H.R. 1254 (The Equal COLA Act). This Act would insure that FERS employees receive the same COLA pay adjustments as CSRS employees. **Status:** Referred to the House Committee on Oversight and Reform on February 14, 2020.

H.R. 3348/S.1898 (Merit Act). These bills streamline the employee removal process by reducing due process for federal employees. **Status:** H.R. 3348 was referred to the House Committee on Oversight and reform on June 19, 2019. S. 1898 was referred to Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs that same day.

H.R. 3726 (RECOVER Act). This bill provides lifetime identity protection for individuals affected by the 2015 OPM data breach. **Status:** Referred to the House Committee on Oversight and Reform on July 11, 2019.

H.R. 1073/S.426 (Federal Civilian Adjustment of Income Rates (FAIR)Act) This bill provides an average 3.6 percent federal pay raise in 2020. **Status:** H.R. 1073 was referred to House Committees on Oversight and Reform on February 7, 2019. S.426 was referred to the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs the same day.

H.R. 1534/S.174 (Federal Employees Paid Leave Act of 2019). This bill provides 12 weeks of paid leave in connection with the birth, adoption or foster placement of a child and other medical conditions to federal employees. **Status:** H.R. 1534 was referred to the House Committees on Oversight and Reform and Administration on March 5, 2019. S.174 was

placed on the Senate Legislative Calendar under General Orders (Calendar 173) on August 16, 2019.

H.R. 3506 (Wage Grade Employee Parity Act). This legislation requires that the percentage increase in rates of basic pay for Wage Grade federal employees is equal to the percentage increase received by General Schedule federal employees. **Status:** Referred to the House Committee on Oversight and Reform on June 26, 2019.

H.R. 4493 (Federal Employee Short Term Disability Insurance Act of 2019). This bill provides short term, non-work-related disability insurance for federal employees. **Status:** Referred to the House Committee on Oversight and Reform on September 25, 2019.

H.R. 2478 (The Federal Retirement Fairness Act). This Act would permit federal employees who started their careers in temporary positions before transitioning into permanent roles to contribute retroactively to their retirement for years they held a temporary position. **Status:** Referred to the House Committee on Oversight and Reform on May 2, 2019.



STATE LEGISLATION
Ed Bice

The General Assembly session continues with bill hearings including Maryland's Federation priority legislation issues. Governor Hogan's bills SB 278 and HB 342 "Tax Reduction Act of 2020" were heard on February 5 and 14, Paul Schwartz and Bob Doyle testified for NARFE. Our number one issue decoupling was included in SB 486 and HB 788 titled "Income Tax - Itemized Deductions" was heard on February 12 and 21. Paul Schwartz testified on both bills. On SB 486 the following members Ed Bice, Frank and Ellen Lee, Kent Nilsson, Rhonda Hackley, and Bertha McNeill came to Annapolis to show support for the bill. Thank you. A special shout out to Frank Lee and all chapter members who sent an email letter to the governor, delegates and senators supporting the above four bills. I talked to Del. Wivell (R- Dist.2) sponsor of HB 788 after the hearing who reported that many delegates had received by email/phone a great deal of support for his bill.

Kirwan Commission

The General Assembly continues to hold hearing on proposals by the commission. The first bills were SB1 and HB1. Both bills were passed and await further action. The bills represent the largest school structural and repair activity ever presented in legislation. Hearing rooms and hallways were filled with school advocates who made their presence known during the session and also during the summer. Legislators continue to seek revenue sources to fund the billions of dollars required in the proposals.



TREASURERS REPORT	
Balance on: December 31, 2019	\$10,827.11
Income:	\$684.86
Expenses:	\$448.05
Balance on: January 31, 2019	\$11,063.92
Reserve for Alzheimer's Fund	\$45.00

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**Greater Bowie-Crofton Area
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