



## National Active and Retired Federal Employees APPLETON-FOX VALLEY CHAPTER 437 NEWSLETTER

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NOVEMBER 2020

### FROM PRESIDENT MERLIN SANDERFOOT

As of now, there should be a 1.3 percent cost-of-living for Civil Service (CSRS) and Federal Employee (FERS) retirement systems annuitants. Following are some facts from an article that originally appeared on USA TODAY. For the average retiree who got a check of \$1,523 this year, that would mean an additional \$20 a month. Year 2020 increase on the same amount was 1.6% or \$23.40. Never in the history of Social Security have COLAs been this low for such a long period of time, according to Mary Johnson, a policy analyst for Senior Citizen League. Nearly 43 million beneficiaries could see much or all of their cost-of-living wiped out because of increases in premiums for Medicare Part B, which are deducted from many Social Security checks. For others, the Medicare offset could make any COLA benefit marginal. Under a "hold harmless" provision, Medicare premium increases are generally adjusted so they don't reduce Social Security benefits. SSA bases its

cost-of-living adjustment on average annual increases in the consumer price index for urban wage earners and clerical workers, or CPI-W. As we all know by now that index doesn't reflect the spending patterns of seniors who buy less gasoline, electronics and other products that make up the CPI-W. She stated since 2000, prescription drug and Medicare Part B costs have more than tripled, homeowners insurance has jumped 174% and home heating oil costs have climbed 172%. During the crisis, 48% of seniors have gone without essentials such as food and face masks, according to survey the league conducted over the summer. Forty-five percent said their savings dropped significantly. And 19% put off filling one or more prescriptions due to price spike caused by COVID-19-related shortages or supply chain disruptions. Over the past two decades, Social Security recipients have lost 30% of their buying power as COLAs increased a total 53% while the cost of goods and services

typically purchased by retirees jumped nearly twice as much – 99.3% according to the league. Johnson has called for the SSA to base its COLA on a proposed index for the elderly called CPIU-E that would put more weight on health, food and other expenditures.

This brings us to H.R. 1553 – Fair COLA for Seniors Act. As of the first of the year H.R. picked up 4 more cosponsors, and now stands at 39. We still need to contact our Representatives and ask for their yes vote.

A little information on the Golden Corral, the latest news article I saw stated it looks like it could reopen at any moment. Its neon is still lit. Its website says “operations temporarily suspended. Still hoping to have a December meeting. If anybody has a suggestion on another place, please let me know.

Upon a suggestion, I contacted the Pizza Ranch on Eisenhower Dr. in Appleton, and they would be more than willing to host us in either of their private rooms (24 or 42). The menu would be pasta, chicken, mashed potatoes and gravy, desserts and of course pizzas. We will see how things are in another month, because we will need a count.

#### **FROM TOM BUSS, LEGISLATIVE CHAIRMAN**

The CPI-W index used to determine COLA's has been accused of not taking into account housing and medical care for seniors. In fact, 8 factors of the economy are taken into account to determine COLA's. And 2 of these factors are housing and medical care.

The latest OPM data shows that military veterans number 31% of the federal workforce. 13% of which are disabled.

#### **FROM THE DESK OF LEE BENNER**

This is an article from NARFE National website that explains Schedule F, and asks us to contact our representatives to let them know we want them to vote NO on this bill.

#### **Schedule F Call to Action and Update**

Visit NARFE's Legislative Action Center to urge your lawmakers to block the president's Executive Order (EO) 13957, which will convert tens, or even hundreds of thousands of civil service positions into political appointments. The president's action threatens the integrity of a professional, nonpartisan civil service—a federal standard since the late 1800s.

If fully implemented, this executive order will allow agency heads to move employees into a new Schedule F excepted service designation. Civil service rules ensure federal employees are hired and fired based on their merit, not their political connections or lack thereof. These rules protect employees from being removed for choosing adherence to the Constitution, laws and professional standards over politically motivated actions.

Our country needs a competent, impartial civil service that holds the trust of the American people. Help protect the civil service today by emailing your lawmakers.

In response to the executive order, NARFE National President Ken Thomas issued a [letter](#) to Congress asking lawmakers to nullify this order, regardless of the results of the election. Congressional Democrats sent a [letter](#) to the acting director of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), Michael J. Rigas and requested that OPM “cease any activities related to the implementation of this executive order while the Committee obtains documents and information regarding the development of this policy.” The letter contained a portion of NARFE's previously released [statement](#) on the matter.

Now that we have that taken care of, I hope this newsletter finds you all in good health. It doesn't look like we will be able to forget about self quarantining anytime soon. With the reports showing new record highs almost everyday, I, for one am not about to jeopardize myself with not taking steps to protect myself. I have personally seen the effects of this disease. No Thanks.

We will still not have a meeting in November, but we have possibly found a spot if people are interested in getting together in December. Please let one of your officers know if you would come to the Pizza Ranch that Merlin talked about in his article. If we decide to go there, we would need to know how many would attend so we can make reservations for the proper sized room. If you know of any other places we could meet, please again let your officers know as soon as possible.

Hope you are able to enjoy our beautiful weather this week. I, for one am tired of being cooped up at home all the time alone. Our chapter is also still in need of some new officers. We need a President, Secretary and Treasurer. Without people to fill these positions, our chapter will be disbanding at the end of the year. Please let Merlin know if any of you are interested in filling one of those positions as soon as possible. If there are enough people interested I would be more than willing to give up my jobs also. Just a thought.

By now I am assuming that all of you have received your notices from Open Season Processing Center with your new rates for your health insurance for next year if you keep the same plan and your status has not changed. Mine with Blue Cross/Blue Shield self only standard 104 has gone up \$14.18

per month. If you are satisfied with your present plan you will not need to do anything. If you want to change plans then you will have to let OPM know what you want to do. If you have to change from self plus one to self only, you will need to make that change also. If you have any questions, call me and I will attempt to help you figure out your situation.

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY WISHES TOO:**

**ART HANSEN DECEMBER 19<sup>TH</sup>**

**JIM WOLFF DECEMBER 20<sup>TH</sup>**

**MILT POLLNOW DECEMBER 23<sup>RD</sup>**

**GARY KOEHNKE DECEMBER 26<sup>TH</sup>**

**MARGARET VERMEERN DECEMBER 28<sup>TH</sup>**

**GENE SCHELFOUT DECEMBER 29<sup>TH</sup>**

**HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO:**

**RONA AND CARL KIETZKANN DEC. 28<sup>th</sup>**

**These are all the birthdays and anniversaries I am aware of.**

**HAPPY VETERANS DAY!**





NARFE FOX VALLEY CHAPTER 437  
1137 East Nawada St  
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**FROM YOUR OFFICERS!**

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**OUR NEXT REGULAR MEETING WILL BE ON ??????,  
AND WILL AT THE GOLDEN CORRAL ON WESTHILL  
BOULEVARD OFF OF WISCONSIN AVENUE IN  
APPLETON.  
MEETING BEGINS AT 12:30 PM**

**IF YOU PLAN TO EAT PLEASE PLAN TO BE THERE IN  
TIME TO FINISH BY THE TIME THE MEETING STARTS.  
THE GOLDEN CORRAL OPENS AT 10:30 am  
THANK YOU!**