

National Active and Retired Federal Employees LA CROSSE – CHAPTER 370 – NEWSLETTER

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SPRINGTIME IN WISCONSIN ?!?!?

As I compile this newsletter, the mighty Mississippi is at flood stage. This will be so disappointing for those who had planned a weekend of camping along the river in nearby campgrounds. For that matter, many outdoor activities will have to deal with a good chance of rain. Let's hope the farmers are able to get their crops planted soon. Yes, springtime in Wisconsin.

PICNIC IN STODDARD

The past several years we have gathered at the park in Stoddard for our annual picnic. It is a chance for all to journey down the mighty Mississippi and enjoy the view of this beautiful area we live in. We hope you can take the time to fellowship with your NARFE friends.

Just a reminder to those who have already signed up to bring a dish to pass.

Main Dish: Dolores Barker
Sloppy Joes/Buns: Jan Stacey
Chicken Wings: Joyce Weise
Salad: Terry & Nancy Loper
Fruit Salad: Char Lebakken
Desserts: Jim Nisson & Maripat Willis

For those who were not at the meeting to sign up, you may bring anything you would like!....Just come!!

Drinks will be provided. Just bring your table settings and an old table cloth if you have one.

We will play a little bingo after we eat.

**ANNUAL CHAPTER 370 PICNIC
JUNE 14TH
Gather at 11:30 and eat at NOON
at the
STODDARD PARK**

Federation Convention Report

By Emeron Christensen

The convention venue was at the very large and beautiful Chula Vista Resort at Wisconsin Dells. The resort is 3 miles north of the city along the Wisconsin River, and features hundreds of rooms and condos, two water parks, a conference center, food services and sports bar all in several multi-story and interconnected buildings along a 1/4 mile of the river. The accommodations were excellent and the convention proceeded smoothly, thanks to the Madison Chapter.

Monday afternoon pre-convention activity included workshops for NARFE advocacy and on passing assets to the next generation.

Tuesday morning President Greg Habeck brought the convention to order and roll call was taken, with approximately 90 members and guests in attendance. The minutes from the 2016 convention were approved. The treasurer's report showed total income of \$13,257.08, total expenses of \$12,040.12 and net worth of \$47,145.81 for the year ending 03/31/2017.

Jessica Klement, our National Legislative Director, gave us a legislative update and a reminder of the several ways we Feds have been tapped for \$120 Billion during the past six years. She also enumerated the potential "claw backs" we can expect to come up in the future. Examples include cuts in retirement benefits using unfavorable COLA calculations, arbitrary adjustments to COLAs, high-five in lieu of high-three years as the basis and elimination of the FERS annuity supplement in 2018. We seem to have targets on our backs. Pres Trump is reported to have remarked that the federal government "needs a good shutdown". Looking ahead to the FY 2018 budget noise, she reminded us that budget resolutions are only a guide, but when a budget bill reaches the House/Senate reconciliation stage then things get serious. I could add that then is the time for advocacy to get going with a vengeance. Actually, any time is a good time because our congressional delegation counts responses. She ended her presentation with remarks and the importance of recruiting/retention of new members. This is much needed for NARFE to survive.

Ed Konys, our Region IV Vice President, gave us an update on membership numbers, legislative activism and strategic planning for the future of NARFE. In 2016, we lost 9,800 members leaving us with current membership at 212,500. We are also losing chapters because too few members will agree to serve as officers. For effective activism, he reminded us once again of the importance of giving our email addresses to National HQ and subscribing to the communications offered by HQ. Currently only 40% of us have done so. When one has an email account with HQ we not only can get up-to-the-minute information on what congress is doing, but also gives you access to the NARFE Legislative Action Center where form letters are available for you to add personalized comments and then send these to your congressional delegation. He reminded us that our 'silence' is taken as our approval of what they are doing. Regarding future planning for NARFE see stratplan@narfe.org on the web. Lastly, he announced that our new Executive Director is Barb Sido effective May 15.

A memorial service was conducted for the approximately 125 Federation members who passed away during the past year. Our chapter lost 10 members since May, 2016.

Diana Juliano-Chan, Region IV Alzheimer's Coordinator, presented her donations report.

Bonnie Nutt, Programs and Advocacy Manager for the South-Central WI Chapters of the Alzheimer's Association, presented some tips on how to help others cope with the disease.

Mark Schmidt, WI Federation Alzheimer's Chairman reported a good year with donations totaling \$6,322.51. The Kenosha Chapter again earned the award for most donated. A silent auction for Alzheimer's also brought in a substantial amount.

Seven bylaws changes were considered, with all being related to the change from an Annual to Biennial Federation Conventions. NARFE delegates voted 43-9 to have a convention Biennially instead of Annually. The Federation board may plan a training seminar in conjunction with the convention. This change is expected to save the Federation approximately \$10,000 every other year.

Wednesday morning incumbent officers were re-elected. They were President, Greg Habeck – Secretary, Sandra Wood - Director, Kevin Donnelly. Our congratulations to these officers and thank you for serving.

Taken from the NARFE Hotline

Message from NARFE President Richard G. Thissen

"The president's budget is out and the threats are real. This budget goes beyond previous attacks by taking aim at those who already have retired. NARFE members must stand against these unprecedented attacks and let their legislators

know that we will not tolerate such an insult. As public servants, we worked hard for our benefits while serving this great nation. Now we are being singled out simply because we chose to work for the greater good. This budget is disrespectful and tells all those associated with public service – in the past, present and future – that years of dedication to this country can be wiped away.”

President’s 2018 Budget Contains Substantial Cuts to Federal Retirement Benefits

The president’s 2018 [budget](#) proposal was released this week and contains unprecedented threats to the earned pay and benefits of federal workers and retirees. NARFE feels strongly that this budget is a step in the wrong direction and we urge our members to [contact](#) their legislators and ask them to reject the egregious cuts aimed at the federal community.

The budget contains a series of provisions that negatively impact the earned benefits for federal workers who are already retired. Notably, cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) for current and future retirees under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) would be reduced by 0.5 percent each year, and for current and future retirees under the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS), COLAs would be eliminated altogether. This amounts to taking away hundreds of thousands of dollars of earned money from the pockets of retirees

The president’s budget also takes aim at the benefits of current FERS workers, impacting financial plans for retirement. Federal employees covered under FERS would see employee contributions to their annuities increased by 1 percent each year for the next six years, without any corresponding benefit increase. This will cost FERS employees \$72 billion over the next 10 years, and more thereafter. Additionally, both CSRS and FERS annuities would be based on the average of the highest five years of salary instead of the current highest three.

Furthermore, the FERS Annuity Supplement would be eliminated for new retirees beginning in 2018. Those who are currently receiving the supplement would still maintain the benefit. However, federal law enforcement officers and other workers forced to retire early due to age caps would not receive the supplement if they retire in or after 2018.

The president’s budget also would shift \$54 billion in discretionary funding from government agencies to defense spending and avoid sequestration-related cuts. On a positive note, the budget also outlined a 1.9 percent pay increase for the federal workforce and a 2.1 percent increase for military personnel.

BUDGET EFFECTS ON COLA

COLAs for current and future Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) retirees would be eliminated altogether. COLAs for Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) retirees would be reduced by 0.5 percent each year from what it would have been otherwise.

Federal employees covered under FERS would see employee contributions to their annuities increased by 1 percent each year for the next six years, without any corresponding benefit increase. This will cost FERS employees \$71.2 billion over the next 10 years, and more thereafter.

The FERS Annuity Supplement would be eliminated for new retirees starting in 2018.

Federal pensions would be based on the average of the highest five years of salary instead of the highest three.

Many legislators on Capitol Hill consider this budget "dead-on-arrival," so it will be telling if Congress takes up any of the proposed changes. It is important that NARFE members remain vigilant and [speak out](#) against these egregious cuts. Write your legislators and urge them to reject any attempts to cut or reduce the earned pay and benefits of the federal community.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

For those who have access to the computer, go the NARFE Website – Go to Legislation – Go to Take Action. It is easy to follow. (I know many of you have done this.) We must ask our legislators to reject these changes to our COLA and reject the cuts aimed at the federal community.

No computer? Your legislators are listed on the first page of this newsletter.

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