



Region IX Biennial Symposium October 24-26, 2024 Kennewick, WA

Symposium Committee members: Region IX Vice-president, advisor and host Steven Roy; Conference Committee Chair Mary Binder; Conference Committee Secretary Bea Bull (Virtual); Alaska Federation President and Chapter Programs Trainer Paul McIntosh; Idaho Federation President and Vendor coordinator Keri Gibbs; Idaho Federation Secretary and AMS trainer Harold Kehr; Montana Federation member Vicki Walbruch; Oregon Federation President and advisor Ruthann Couch; Oregon members Bernie and Colleen Hewes; Washington Federation (WSF) President and advisor Cray Henry; WSF Secretary; Social Media/Webmaster and FEDHub Trainer Linda Wallers; WSF Treasurer and Conference Finance Coordinator Arlene Patton; WSF Legislative, and NARFE-PAC Coordinator and Trainer Doug Rushton; Service Officer, Trainer, and Bagpiper Charlie Caughlan; and WSF Vice-president and advisor Mary Traxler (virtual).

Featured Speakers: NARFE National President Bill Shackelford (in-person); and Region IX Past Alzheimer's Coordinator Wally Walbruch.

Via Zoom: NARFE Senior Vice President, Policy, and Programs John Hatton; NARFE Senior Director for Communications and Marketing Jennifer Rafael; NARFE Director of Member Engagement Nora McDonald; and Alaska Juneau chapter President David Epstein.

October 24

Call to Order – Mary Binder opened the Symposium with a welcome, administrative information and a brief program overview for members and guests.

Next, Region IX VP Steven Roy also welcomed attendees and then introduced healthcare provider representatives who provided brief information/updates on their respective plans. Included were:

During the remainder of the afternoon, the Washington State Federation conducted its annual meeting; and the Idaho and Montana Federations Federation held executive board meetings. Minutes of those meetings are the responsibility of the federation secretaries.

The day ended with a social – a no-host bar and finger food.

October 25

Call to Order – Mary Binder started the morning with administrative information for members/guests and a brief overview of the program. Keri Gibbs promoted the Alzheimer's table and asked for everyone to stop by. Mary said she had received a card from Visit Tri-Cities stating they were happy to see NARFE return to Kennewick after a five-year absence, primarily due to COVID. Visit Tri-Cities provided the welcome bags and literature for members and guests.

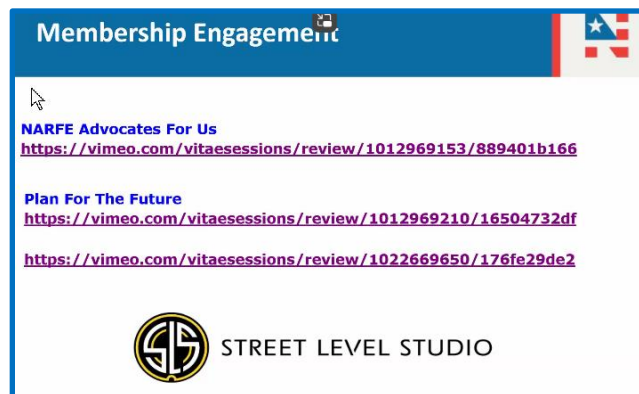
Steven Roy introduced NARFE National President Bill Shackelford, who attended in-person and gave the attendees a brief update on NARFE. Financially, NARFE is in good shape even though there have been significant membership losses over the last several years (and decades). There currently are 30 headquarters staff positions. NARFE leadership is reviewing the structure of the organization and may change from non-profit 501(c)(5) to 501(c)(3) (created for religious, charitable, scientific, and educational purposes); to 501(c)(4) which

advocates social welfare, and which Bill suggested would be a better fit for NARFE; or 501(c)(6), which is organized around members’ common interests, an alternative option. There is still a lot to research before any changes could begin to take place, especially since the charitable piece is still unclear.

The NARFE building has been for sale and is valued at \$7.2 million, with only one floor occupied and no bidders for the property. NARFE would like to move to a smaller facility. But, without a buyer, NARFE is also checking opportunities to lease the vacated floors – not easy in an office space market that continues to be depressed since COVID.

The upgrades to the Association Management System (AMS) continue. The data has all been transitioned, but the REPORTS functions are not working as anticipated. This affects both the AMS and the new financial database system which MUST WORK accurately and reliably before going fully operational.

Bill gave a brief preview of the speakers, from HQ, who will make presentations to the members via Zoom (John Hatton, Jennifer Rafael, and Nora McDonald). He also mentioned a current effort between Nora and Street Level Studio (a Chicago marketing and design agency) working with agency Human Resources departments (the office that normally handles employee benefits) in an effort to increase NARFE brand awareness in agencies, grow NARFE membership, and retain current members. They have created a few videos to aid in this effort. The videos, starring Mary Binder and other NARFE members who attended FEDCon24, were shown to the attendees but have not yet been released for public viewing. This is a positive membership engagement effort to rebuild NARFE membership. This was an effort begun by WSF President Cray Henry and the other federation presidents who recognized the absence of recruiting opportunities, after 9/11, and asked for NARFE HQ to pick up some of the burden. Members may be seeing advertisements for NARFE in print and (mostly) social media, including videos and other outreach efforts to make NARFE a brand across the country.




Membership Engagement

NARFE Advocates For Us
<https://vimeo.com/vitaesessions/review/1012969153/889401b166>

Plan For The Future
<https://vimeo.com/vitaesessions/review/1012969210/16504732df>

<https://vimeo.com/vitaesessions/review/1022669650/176fe29de2>

 STREET LEVEL STUDIO

John Hatton, NARFE Staff Vice-president of Policy and Programs, was next with an Advocacy Update: What’s the latest and what’s ahead. He began by discussing NARFE’s collaborative approach/strategy, a three-legged approach using lobbying, grassroots in the field – NARFE members, federations, and chapters writing letters, meetings with congressional staff, and engaging in community events – to the grass tops – NARFE leadership giving testimony to Congress, mobilizing membership, and representing the members from a seat at the table of Washington DC’s decision-makers, and NARFE-PAC which gives NARFE direct access to lawmakers. The HQ advocacy team meets with lawmakers and staff on Capitol Hill, helps with draft legislation and guidance on federal community matters; and interacts with agency and

administration officials. NARFE-PAC, NARFE’s political arm, supports federal employee-friendly incumbents and candidates, giving NARFE a “seat at the table” with other interest groups.

To date, NARFE has been successful with ZERO cuts to federal retirement and health benefits since 1996. Even facing significant budget threats to eliminate COLAs, reduce the rate of return on “G” funds in the TSP and reducing the governments share of contributions to health benefits, over the last 15 years NARFE’s efforts have been rewarded for all but the most recent (2013/2014) new hires who will pay increased contributions to their retirement funds.

HR 82 (WEP/GPO elimination) was very successful in the 118th Congress with the measure getting sufficient signatures for the discharge petition so that it will go to the House floor for a vote soon after the election followed by Senators Susan Collins (ME) and Sherrod Brown (OH) bringing the companion bill, S 597 to the Senate floor for a vote.

Looking ahead, NARFE is reviewing advocacy positions and priorities for the 119th Congress submitted by federation boards and chapters, developed by the Advocacy Committee, and recommended to and by the National Executive Board

(NEB) to provide guidance on endorsements and support of various bill proposals. With only 25 months per Congress and limited resources, prioritizing issues is necessary. Bill Shackleford has the final say on those priorities. Among the priorities already in place are:

- The debt limit fight tied to the Republican Study Committee report and the threat of a fiscal commission to bring down the debt, most likely on the backs of federal employees.
- Increased funding for OPM customer service and streamlining retirement applications by making them digital (online – pilot program).
- Improved Medicare integration with FEHB – the Postal Service Healthcare Benefit (PSHB) program final rule on Part D for postal employees who opt out is problematic.
- Improving government and protecting the Merit System.
- Relief from FLTCIP premium increases.
- Support for market rate increases – a 4.5% increase with a 4% locality increase (market rate) was proposed but the Biden administration substituted 2% raise.


John closed with a Congressional election outlook that suggested a Republican majority in the Senate, as of October 19, 2024 with the Presidential election still a toss-up.

Next up, from NARFE National HQ, Nora McDonald, Director of Member Engagement. Nora has been working with a marketing organization to reduce the membership losses and improve

Advocacy Priorities

Protect Earned Retired and Health Benefits – Source of Threats

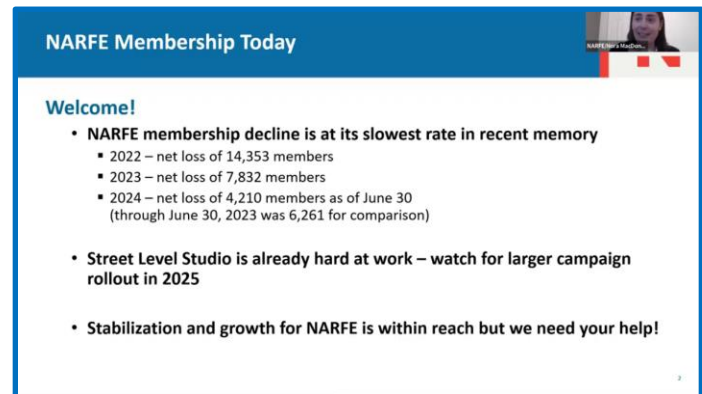
- **Where?**
 - Congressional budget resolutions
 - Presidential budget proposals
 - Think tank proposals
- **What?**
 - Increased contributions toward retirement
 - Reducing rate of return on TSP G fund
 - Reductions to/Elimination of COLAs
 - Elimination of FERS annuity supplement (existing employees)
 - Eliminate FERS entirely (new hires_
 - Increase employee share of FEHB premiums



retention. So far, there has been a significant drop in losses and the plan is to roll out a nationwide campaign in 2025.

She made recommendations for how field members can discover opportunities to approach active federal employees such as discovering the HR component in the locally based federal agencies and, when you do have a prospect, giving a rundown of the advantages of being a NARFE member (first year chapter dues are free; discount for Dues Withholding memberships; and auto renewal for those who don't want to be reminded to renew). NARFE webinars are also a huge draw for new and current members. In addition, Nora reminded the members that NARFE provides a 50% matching funds reimbursement for recruiting efforts including travel/sponsorship for events that are away and advertising/promotional opportunities.

Keep tabs on your members and remind them when their renewal dates are coming up. Call, email, or send reminder notices before their membership lapses. Consider hybrid meetings to pull in members who don't attend in person or social events or luncheons to help you keep members engaged. Nora also encouraged succession planning for officers which would help the next generation of leadership to get a good start.



NARFE Membership Today

Welcome!

- **NARFE membership decline is at its slowest rate in recent memory**
 - 2022 – net loss of 14,353 members
 - 2023 – net loss of 7,832 members
 - 2024 – net loss of 4,210 members as of June 30 (through June 30, 2023 was 6,261 for comparison)
- **Street Level Studio is already hard at work – watch for larger campaign rollout in 2025**
- **Stabilization and growth for NARFE is within reach but we need your help!**

During the working Lunch, Oregon Federation President Ruthann Couch served as facilitator for the FEHB carriers panel where each one was asked to respond to questions asked by members. The panel consisted of Gary Floring (GEHA), Chris Mabli (GEHA/Group Medicare Advantage Plans administered by United Healthcare - UHC), Michelle Hatmaker (UHC), Mary Lynn Schmid (Blue Cross Blue Shield-Idaho), and, Stephanie King and Tiffany Todd (Kaiser Permanente).

The big news came toward the end of the panel when Michelle discussed OPM's final rule regarding the Postal Service Healthcare Benefit (PSHB) on the prescription or Medicare Part D, that postal workers are going to be required to take or there'll be a penalty. She said, "[F]or those of you that were unaware, there's been a lot of discussion about Part D integration under the PSHB program. The final ruling just dropped two days ago. So essentially, we haven't been able to talk about the Part D integration until that final rule posted." Now that it has been released, she continued, "if you are retired with Medicare Parts A, or A and B, and you are postal, you must be in Part D prescription drugs under the PSHB program, and if you opt out, you will not go back to the commercial drug coverage. You will not have prescription drug benefits through the PSHB program, and you will not get a reduction in premium."

"In FEHB this year, they rolled out Part D and you could opt out and go back to the regular prescriptions, right? That is not the case for postal [employees]. If they opt out, they will not have Part D prescription drugs through the PSHB program. They will not have prescription

drugs through the PSHB program at all. There are a couple of legitimate reasons why you might want to consider opting out if you have maybe a Cadillac Golden Amazing plan through a spouse employer that includes Part D, you can't have two Part D plans at a time, so you may want to consider opting out in those circumstances." She went on to say that, if you mistakenly opted out, you have a 90-day grace period to correct that error. If you don't, then you can enroll during the next open season and will not have a penalty "if you had credible prescription drug coverage during the time that you opted out. So, if you got drug coverage elsewhere, most plans are considered credible."

NARFE Senior Director of Communications and Marketing Jennifer Rafael was the first afternoon speaker. She began with an update on the AMS upgrade. She became the primary point of contact for the vendors, the Configuration Advisory Board (CAB), and members for AMS issues, replacing Johann DeCastro who departed NARFE in September. After six years of working with an earlier and less capable version of Microsoft Enterprise Software,, dealing with numerous problems, it was time to move to Microsoft Dynamics 365 for a more flexible and stable AMS. Members should see no difference, but officers are temporarily restricted in AMS due to issues with federation and chapter REPORTS. The good news is that this upgrade will make it easier to launch and update FEDHub communities, it moves NARFE data into an open, cloud-based data infrastructure that enables availability, integration, portability, and security of enterprise data which will help NARFE streamline workflows and increase productivity while giving NARFE greater customization options to improve REPORTS formats (we hope) and data accuracy. Officers can view their chapter/federation dashboards. There are a few changes to the Officer Portal, mostly obsolete buttons of the deactivated Online Activity Module (OAM) and the Online Reports Module (ORM). But REPORTS are still not quite where they need to be for release.

The NARFE Financial software also underwent upgrades over the same period and, since that deals with NARFE's cashflow, including payments to federations and chapters, it is the primary focus of NARFE staff to make that accurate and reliable as soon as possible. Along with the financial and REPORTS issues, the microsites were briefly not available for updating, but those issues were fixed, and the sites are now ready for updates.

One of the benefits to upgrading is that FEDHub communities will no longer have a syncing problem, making it easier to create and update FEDHub communities, including Chapter Communities. One such chapter community was recently piloted and appears to have been successfully populated with the correct number of chapter members. The chapter president sent out a test email, asking for responses, and the responses were positive. Chapters that want a chapter community should identify who will be the chapter administrator (with access rights/position code to email all members) and make the request to create it after the beginning of the new year.

Jenn answered a few questions about AMS and the format for certain REPORTS. The column headers and order are not standardized across all REPORTS. One chapter member report will have names in one column; another member list will have the last and first names in two different columns. Each report should look the same, with column names and order the

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same. Jenn indicated that she has asked the CAB to help with creating a standardized format for the REPORTS.

NARFE National President Bill Shackelford agreed that chapter membership chairs can contact their dropped members who have gone from chapter membership to National-only in order to verify whether they did that by choice or by accident. That would be the only legitimate reason for any chapter to contact a National-only member.

Region IX Vice-president Steven Roy updated members on what has happened over the last few years. Steven began with a few announcements:

- Johann DeCastro, Staff Vice-president for Finance and Administration departed in September. There is no current replacement.
- John Hatton discussed LEGcon25 in June. The exact dates will be determined after the Congressional calendar is released in early January.
- The NEB will decide, on November 15, where FEDcon26 will be. The two venue choices are Indianapolis, Indiana and Fort Worth, Texas. That NEB meeting will have a full agenda.

Steven asked for the five Region IX federation Presidents to come forward with the awards they received at FEDcon24. He called them Advocacy Benchmark awards – every time members meet with their representatives, use the Legislative Action Center, email, phone, or document some contact with a representative, NARFE National tracks the activities, according to Ivana Serra, one of John Hatton’s staff. They decided to create awards for the activity, so the Oregon Federation received a Platinum Award (etched glass plaque); Washington and Idaho received Gold (statues); silver was awarded to Montana, and Alaska received an Honorable mention (certificate). All five Region IX federations were honored for their efforts.

Olivia Williams presented the Alzheimer’s awards. Washington took third place for the amount NARFE members raised from July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024. Idaho took fourth place, and Oregon was in fifth place with the highest per capita contributions. He thanked all the federations for their work in “leading the charge and getting things done,” adding that the Region IX members are movers and shakers.

Steven gave a call out to Lanny Ross, former Region IX Vice-president who was unable to attend. He was an activist, mover and shaker, too. And we all wished him well.

Steven had one more set of awards to present. He had NARFE pins that he intended to present at the WSF conference in 2020, before COVID struck. First up was:

- Paul McIntosh, Alaska Federation President
- Jane McIntosh, Alaska Federation Treasurer
- Keri Gibbs, Idaho Federation President
- Harold Kehr, Immediate past Idaho Federation President
- Wally Walbruch, former Region IX Alzheimer’s coordinator
- Ed McLaughlin, Secretary/Treasurer of the Kalispell, Montana chapter 0032
- Ruthann Couch, Oregon Federation President, first Vice-president, and Legislative coordinator;
- Charlie Caughlan, Washington Federation Service Officer, Chapter 0131 First Vice President, PAC Coordinator, Service Officer and Region IX resident Bagpiper

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- Cray Henry, Washington Federation President
- Dr. Felix Spinelli, Montana Federation past President and Bozeman, Montana Chapter President
- Scott Robinson, President of the Spokane, Washington chapter
- Merry Byrum, Membership Chair and Service Officer of the Everett, Washington chapter 0193
- Theresa Blahato, Secretary of the Seattle, Washington chapter 0043
- Gene Blahato, Treasurer of the Seattle Chapter 0043
- Mary Binder, Eastern Washington District Vice-president, Federation Reporter editor, and a wearer of many hats both past and present and now video star
- Colleen Hewes, Oregon Federation Secretary and Hermiston, Oregon Chapter President
- Linda Wallers, Washington Federation Secretary and former webmaster and social media coordinator who came from Las Vegas to join us
- Curtis Price, newly elected Washington Federation Secretary (to take his position fully on January 1), current Washington Federation webmaster and social media coordinator, and symposium event logistical coordinator serving as this event's IT troubleshooter
- Nancy Crosby, Washington Federation Past President and another wearer of many hats during her NARFE career
- Vicki Walbruch, Montana Federation Secretary and Legislative Chair
- Dave Mari, Montana Federation Treasurer
- Janice Erfle, past Montana Federation President and President of the Midland Empire, Montana chapter 0459
- Doug Rushton, Washington Federation Legislative Coordinator
- Arlene Patton, Washington Federation Treasurer, past Area Vice-president and Secretary and Service Officer of the Spokane, Washington chapter 0032
- Wanda Faulkner, Vice-president of the Spokane, Washington chapter 0032
- Bea Bull, Western Washington District Vice-president, Washington Federation Secretary pro tem, District Webmaster and Secretary, Alzheimer's Coordinator and Newsletter Editor of the Bremerton, Washington Chapter 0181 who takes on other duties as assigned (such as secretary for the Region IX Symposium Committee that worked hard to create this event)

Steven also thanked the Tri-Cities chapter 1192 for their efforts to make the symposium a success.

The next agenda item was the Federation Presidents Updates on happenings in their States.

Alaska Federation President Paul McIntosh: Paul stated that Alaska now has just two chapters, facing similar membership declines as other regions. The recent Annual Meeting was successful, with amended bylaws and a default election of the president due to a lack of other volunteers. The president, who assists members with benefits questions, has a scheduled meeting with the Alaska Federal Executive Association to explore potential recruitment opportunities among federal employees.

Alaska is also still pursuing locality pay, an effort shared with Hawaii, as both were excluded from the Federal Employees Pay Comparability Act (FEPCA). Despite ongoing efforts, there has been limited progress on this front.

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Idaho Federation President Keri Gibbs: In her third two-year term as President, Keri noted that revised bylaws could keep her in the role indefinitely. She thanked Harold Kehr and Ken Barr for stepping in during her two-year hiatus. As of October 2, Idaho had 830 members, with two-thirds being National-only members. The Moscow Chapter is closing, with some members transitioning to National-only memberships and others joining nearby Spokane or Sandpoint chapters. Idaho VP Steven Franklin has been pivotal in supporting the Sandpoint Chapter, while Jo Agguire and Harold Kehr have been key in maintaining the Nampa and Idaho Falls chapters, respectively.

She expressed gratitude to BlueCross/BlueShield for facilitating NARFE's access to federal employee venues, and she plans to attend several Open Season events with their reps. Jo Agguire and Patty Ferrell will attend as well, though the National Guard's change in locations means NARFE won't be in Boise this year. Additionally, the Idaho Falls Chapter is setting up a new microsite, with members attending WordPress classes in preparation. Keri closed by thanking Harold, Linda, Jo Aguire, and Joanne for their support at the symposium.

Montana Federation President Ed McLaughlin: Ed McLaughlin shared updates during a meeting. He mentioned the launch of a new NARFE-hosted microsite webpage, with his wife serving as the Federation webmaster, though he joked that his microsite skills need improvement. He highlighted Montana's two recent Alzheimer's Walks, organized by the Kalispell and Bozeman chapters, which collectively raised \$15,000—a success for their fundraising efforts.

They also tried a new approach to increase visibility: participating in Bozeman's Fourth of July parade. With magnetic NARFE signs on their vehicle, they hoped to attract new members. Although they received positive feedback and interest from onlookers, it didn't result in any new memberships. Despite the challenges, Ed expressed hope for the future, emphasizing their commitment to maintaining current chapters and continuing outreach efforts.

Oregon Federation President Ruthann Couch: Ruthann outlined the current status and challenges facing the state's NARFE chapters. Oregon now has 10 chapters but is preparing to close the once-active Salem chapter due to the lack of leadership, leaving nine remaining chapters. Some of these, like Tualatin Valley, have recently become more active; Laurie Brooks took initiative to resume meetings and engage with legislators. However, other chapters, like Gresham and Portland, face leadership vacancies and struggles with member engagement, particularly in returning to in-person meetings post-COVID.

The Eugene chapter, which Ruthann herself leads, is thriving, as is Gresham under President Terry Brown, although he plans to step down. Meanwhile, smaller chapters, like Coos County and Brookings Harbor, are in need of regular meetings and social activities to stay viable. Ruthann also highlighted the Hermiston chapter as active, while Grants Pass recently closed, with many members moving to Eugene.

The federation remains involved in advocacy, participating in events like Alzheimer's Walks and legislative rallies, including Senator Merkley's event to support dependable postal services. Fundraising efforts, such as a no-bake bake sale, continue to support Alzheimer's research. Looking ahead, Ruthann invited members to the 2025 Oregon Federation Conference

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in Newport, a gathering focused on strengthening NARFE's mission and member engagement across Oregon.

Washington Federation President Cray Henry: Cray shared his reflections on chapter closures and recruitment challenges. Over the past two years, Washington has closed three chapters due to officer burnout, with 10 chapters remaining. Of those, he considers five to be strong, while three are at risk. Cray emphasized that maintaining chapters, even minimally, is critical since restarting closed chapters is challenging. His priority is recruitment, which he believes is essential for the Federation's survival, and he expressed optimism about new marketing efforts led by a professional firm, discussed by Nora McDonald earlier in the day. Cray highlighted the need for more recruitment support from NARFE headquarters, particularly for targeted recruitment opportunities.

Although new to NARFE, he expressed appreciation for his executive team, including Linda, Bea, Mary, Arlene, and Doug, but noted the ongoing issue of rotating chapter officers due to burnout.

Cray also observed a difference between National-only and chapter members, noting that National-only members often prioritize advocacy in Washington, D.C., while chapter members value both advocacy and community. He urged greater communication between National-only and chapter members, acknowledging the sense of community chapters provide and the importance of a supportive network.

The rest of the day was spent on brief training sessions.

- **Harold Kehr** discussed **How to Access Member Profiles through the AMS Member Portal**. See Configuration Advisory Board Tutorials for AMS
 - [Keep Your Data Current](#) and
 - [How to Update Your Member Profile](#).
- Linda Wallers provided a [FEDHub: A Community of Communities \(companion narrative\)](#) with a video in work. Due to time limitations, Linda was unable to provide an
 - Intro to the NARFE National Website (video in work), and
 - NARFE-hosted Microsites – What You Need to Know (video in work).
- Doug Rushton discussed How to Access Legislative and NARFE-PAC Information on the NARFE National website.
- Charlie Caughlan led a brief discussion on [How to Report a Member's Death](#) (the segment on reporting a member's death begins at 4:49).
- Harold Kehr returned to explain Member Reports.

With training completed, Steven and Mary did a short wrap-up of the day and reminded attendees that there was a no-host bar and social from 5:00 pm until 6:00 pm followed by the banquet with entertainment provided by **Jeff Peterson**, Jazz Vocalist & Trumpet Player.

October 26

Call to Order – Mary Binder started the morning with administrative information for members and a brief overview of the Day Two program. The first order of business was a Remembering Our Members segment, introduced by Steven Roy. Charlie Caughlan (a semi-professional bagpiper, in full dress, played Amazing Grace. Next, each federation president provided the number of chapter and National-only members who are deceased over the past 2 years in their respective federations (August 1, 2022 thru July 31, 2024, as provided at FEDcon24), provided a short remembrance statement, and lit a (battery-operated) candle. A bell rendered honors for the departed after each federation president’s presentation. After the presentations, there was a moment of silence and respect.

- Alaska Federation President Paul McIntosh: 12 members,
- Idaho Federation President Keri Gibbs: 47 members,
- Montana Federation President Ed Mclaughlin: 25 members,
- Oregon Federation President Ruthann Couch: 103 members,
- Washington State Federation President Cray Henry: 209 members, and
- Region IX Vice-president Steven Roy: 300 members

Following lighting of the candles ceremony, the remembrance followed a longstanding Gaelic tradition to have a bagpiper play to honor the memory of the deceased. Charlie Caughlan (a semi-professional bagpiper, in full dress) played the lament titled “Flowers of the Forest” on the bagpipes as he slowly walked out of the room.

The First speaker for the day was Alaska Federation’s Juneau Chapter 2088 President David Epstein, via Zoom, to talk about ideas for chapter meetings. He posed a question: “What do you hope to accomplish with the programs you conduct?” Because meetings are increasingly unpopular with membership, you need to grab their attention with something entertaining, informative, and/or inspirational to get them to attend. Programs can be either NARFE-related, such as a webinar on some currently important issue to federal annuitants and employees, or they can be outside the scope of NARFE activities, such as discussions on genealogy or historical discussion on things like the Easter 1964 Alaskan Earthquake or Mount St. Helens eruption in 1980.

COVID did one good thing for all of us, releasing us from the limitations of local, in-person programming, allowing speakers from across the state and the country to enter our meetings through Zoom or similar portals. However, some of those in-person speakers are still valued. Government officials, local news or entertainment media, healthcare providers and associated professions (pharmacists, hospitals, first responders), and fitness personnel (physical therapists and fitness coaches) can be entertaining and informative to your members.

To illustrate this idea, David gave a personal story about calling in local government officials to explain controversial policies enacted.

“Here in Juneau, I chair the Board of Equalization. That is the body that hears property tax assessment appeals. Back in 2021, the city and borough of Juneau found out that

they had not field validated rail property or business commercial assessments within the last 10 years. By statute, they're supposed to go out to do it every five years. As a result, the amount that business properties were being assessed at had fallen well behind what it should be. The assembly decided to increase that sector of property tax assessments by 50%. As you can imagine, that created a great hue and cry amongst the commercial business owners. They all came in with about 150 appeals for that year. I shared this because, if you were among the cohort that was getting that 50% increase, wouldn't you want to know what the heck is going on? How are you guys assessing my property? And why did it go up 50% in a year? This was an excellent opportunity to bring in the Juneau City assessor to talk about why they had to do what they did.

The assessor didn't spring out of bed one morning deciding to raise property taxes on our businesses by 50%. This was something that the assembly decided, and the assessor had to execute. So, I asked her to come in and she presented a very informative program on the assessment process. While the inspiration for that invitation was the commercial sector she focused on people's homes, the personal, if you will, non-business property tax assessment process. I've called upon other segments of local government; the Juneau transit system provides transportation for seniors. I brought John Kernan, and he spoke about how the seniors in Juneau avail themselves of this service ~~can~~ that is paid for. That went over well so you know the government affects each of us every day."

David suggested looking for speakers among the Mayor's office, municipal departments, transportation officials, and emergency response/law enforcement. For local media, look for the local newspaper, radio, television, or an internet provider.

Zoom, and similar software, has expanded the reach of organizations looking for speakers, thanks to the pandemic. Some chapters continued to hold meaningful meetings with good speakers from local and outside the local area. David provided examples of ideas that the Juneau chapter used during the pandemic to keep members engaged

WHAT JUNEAU CHAPTER DID

Here are some examples of how we leveraged technology:

- April 2021: we had a rep from Alaska Dept. of Health and Social Services to discuss COVID-19 status;
- December 2021: presentation by a local medevac service
- February 2021: the Washington Post's Federal beat writer
- March 2021: Juneau's state legislative delegation
- November 2022: Aetna and Blue Cross
- October 2022: Alaska Pioneer Home
- February 2022: Cruise Line International Association on state of the industry

David also suggested banks and credit unions who deal with last wills and investment strategies; a representative from a hospital, memory care facility to discuss Alzheimer's treatments and/or care; a person well versed in finance (but not a salesperson) to discuss ways to reduce your tax burden. Think outside of the local box for speakers.

One thing to remember is that not everyone is online. Hybrid meetings (in-person and via software) have been effective in keeping members engaged, too. It's not simple, though. You need to find a tech-savvy person to administer the equipment, a place (library, government facility, American Legion hall, senior living facility) with internet connectivity and Wi-Fi as part

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of the room package, and consideration of speaker requirements for access (full functionality or an intermediary?)

Steven thanked David for his informative presentation and then called for a short break.

Region IX Past Alzheimer’s Coordinator Wally Walbruch was featured after the break, providing the Alzheimer’s Program Update. Wally was sitting in for the current Region IX Alzheimer’s Coordinator Linda McDonnell who was working and unable to attend.

Wally began saying that he (and Vicki Walbruch) is wearing three hats at this meeting, first, as a Blue Star family with a son currently on a year-long deployment in support of the US Military’s Southern Command (SOCOM); second as a Past President of the Montana Federation; and third as a long-time supporter and advocate for Alzheimer’s research. The Walbruch’s belong to the Montana Alzheimer’s Association, and Wally served as Region IX coordinator for several years, assisted by Vicki.

“In a rare bipartisan activity, I am pleased to announce that, on October 2, the US Congress passed two critical pieces of legislation that commits incredible resources to the fight against Alzheimer’s.”

Only ten years ago, Congress provided \$200 million to Alzheimer’s and, now, it is contributing \$3.2 BILLION to the fight. Both bills will help Alzheimer’s research to move forward and improve the delivery of clinical care and services to those diagnosed with this disease.

NARFE began working with Alzheimer’s Research in 1985, not long after the Alzheimer’s Association was formed. NARFE has supported 95 different research projects since

then and is considered a Zenith Society member, one of the first to step up in support of the organization. Wally spoke of attending as a Zenith Society representative in New York where they were escorted through the Mount Sinai Brain Bank and saw some of the astonishing things that are taking place in the science of Alzheimer’s. NARFE members are making an impact on furthering research to end Alzheimer’s.

NARFE’s Alzheimer’s fiscal year is 24 months-long, beginning July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024, for example. From July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024, Region IX contributed a total of \$31,438.12.

NAPA Reauthorization Act and Alzheimer’s Accountability and Investment Act will build on the progress made in the fight against Alzheimer’s

Washington, D.C., October 2, 2024 — Two pieces of critical bipartisan legislation that renew the nation’s commitment to the fight against Alzheimer’s and other dementia were signed into law: the NAPA Reauthorization Act and the Alzheimer’s Accountability and Investment Act. These bipartisan bills will continue the critical work of the National Plan to Address Alzheimer’s Disease to support Alzheimer’s research and improve the delivery of clinical care and services for people impacted by Alzheimer’s.

“Today is a significant day for those impacted by Alzheimer’s and other dementia throughout the nation. With the NAPA Reauthorization Act and the Alzheimer’s Accountability and Investment Act signed into law, our nation has taken a major step forward in the fight against this devastating disease,” said Robert Egge, Alzheimer’s Association chief public policy officer and AIM president. “On behalf of the Alzheimer’s Association, thank you to our outstanding congressional champions on both sides of the aisle for your steadfast leadership and tireless efforts to advance these bills across the finish line.”

Progress in the Fight Against Alzheimer’s <https://youtu.be/UXkhh5ibFtc>

NARFE - Alzheimer’s Fund Program Update

REGION IX Total \$31,438.12

JULY 1, 2023 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2024

Alaska	\$0.00
Idaho	\$4,839.02
Montana	\$1,025.00
Oregon	\$11,501.15
Washington	\$14,072.95

The 2023 Walks to End Alzheimer’s brought in another \$20,635 from Region IX, plus another \$150 for Montana’s The Longest Day Team. So far, from July 1 through September 30,

Region IX Biennial Symposium October 24-26, 2024 Kennewick, WA

2024, Region IX has contributed \$2,137.30. All of the money from the Walk to End Alzheimer’s stays in that state, used to help with care, support, and research.

For 2024 NARFE is sponsoring grant sponsorships totaling \$311,250 for research investigating genetic variations linked to Alzheimer’s and cholesterol levels in the brain that contribute to changes and disease progression. Wally thanked the five federation coordinators and the Region IX coordinator Linda O’Donnell and Region IX VP Steven Roy for all their efforts in support to end Alzheimer’s. Wally followed with request for funds for Alzheimer’s.

Washington Federation Eastern District Vice-president Mary binder was the next speaker, providing a brief talk on outreach and the [NARFE “Elevator speech”](#) (available on the NARFE website) and a hint about what to remember to say, to new prospects, when pressed for time or at a loss for words. Mary uses a tagline to help her remember the key thing about NARFE when she meets with prospects who ask, “What is NARFE? What does NARFE do?” That tagline, “PPP and B,” reminds her to explain that:

“NARFE is the only non-profit organization that exists solely to **Protect and Preserve Federal Pay and Benefits.**”

Mary explained, “I know in talking with people that sometimes they go into a panic mode thinking that you have to give this long explanation of what NARFE is. An elevator speech is something very, very short. So, I use it in presentations as kind of a guideline for me because it has a summary of basically the most important information you need to know about NARFE. I like to leave people with a hook when I’m doing a presentation or you’re talking to people. They may not remember your name. They may not remember the name of the organization. But most people, deep down, are interested in pay and benefits. I extracted that phrase out and that’s the hook I use.

“When the Conference Committee met to discuss potential giveaways, Linda Wallers suggested buttons with the PPP and B phrase to help start a conversation. A lot of people don’t like to wear buttons, but simply keeping it as a reference will help you remember what is most important to know about NARFE - It’s called a five-second sound bite - Protects, preserves, pay, and benefits. If prospects ask questions from there, you can find more information to help you feel comfortable with speaking about NARFE benefits. I even use it on my business cards.

“That’s what this is about. All of you should have one button. There are some extras. If you’re a Federation president, feel free to take some and distribute them. There’s a wealth of information on the NARFE website that can assist you, but, getting to that point means having a place to start that conversation.”





Region IX Biennial Symposium
October 24-26, 2024
Kennewick, WA

Discussion of other opportunities for recruiting came from several members before the silent auction closed and the Ciel of Tri-Cities Senior Living Communities gift basket raffle winner was announced. The Symposium ended with many thanks, hugs from old friends and new, and wishes for safe travel back home.

Submitted by WA Federation Secretary Linda Wallers
Edited by Bea Bull.

Attendance total : 68

NARFE Members Total: 48 (8 via ZOOM)

AL=2 in-person, 1 via Zoom; ID=4;

MT=6; OR=3;

WA=25 in-person, 7 via Zoom HQ=1

Guests: 8 (3 via ZOOM)

ID=1; MT=2; WA=2; HQ=3

Vendors: 11