

Region VIII VP Speech  
2011 FEDERATION CONVENTIONS

As you heard from our National President, this Congress is not very “fed friendly”. We will need to be vigilant and aware of what is being proposed, discussed and introduced as Bills in this Congress. Most of what has been discussed affects the federal employees – but there are also some items which will affect federal retirees. It is extremely important that EVERY NARFE MEMBER be ready to respond very quickly, whether by email, or phone calls, or visits – to NARFE’s legislative alerts and requests for action.

There are some real serious threats to be considered from this 112<sup>th</sup> Congress, based on the Fiscal Commission, the budget reduction proposals, and the fact that there are 95 freshman house members who never worked for the federal government, are not familiar with federal service, and are influenced by media coverage who continually report that federal workers are overpaid is not in our favor.

Therefore, to combat these concerns, the focus of the recent Legislative Conference was to educate NARFE members who in turn were requested to educate their members of Congress. In the March Magazine, on Page 10 – every NARFE member was requested to call Capitol Hill and give the message to their Representative and two Senators: “Don’t single us out by making more cuts to the retirement and health benefits we earned through years of serving the public.” How many of you made those calls? ..... It’s not too late; you can still call... the toll free number is 1-866-220-0044.

I have copies of the handouts (on the side table for you to pick up during recess) (NOTE: THESE HANDOUTS ARE AVAILABLE at: [www.protectamericasheartbeat.org](http://www.protectamericasheartbeat.org)) that were given to every member of Congress who was visited during Lobby Day on the last day of the Legislative Conference. One handout explains that the federal community should not be singled out, and in fact the federal community has already begun their part to help reduce the deficit by saving the nation \$5 billion through the President’s 2 year pay freeze on federal employee’s salaries. The second handout shows that federal employees are actually paid less than their private sector counterparts – 22% less because federal employees accept this lower pay in return for deferred compensation during retirement. It’s the choice made by federal employees who spend their entire career with the federal government, as we did, so we would have compensation during our retirement years.

The Legislative Conference featured five breakout sessions: Budget Cut Threats; The U.S. Budget; Contacting Congress; Grassroots Organizing and NARFE-PAC. These were given by the members of our NARFE Legislative staff and representatives of M+R Strategic Services who are providing the “Protect America’s Heartbeat” Campaign for NARFE.

If you have access to the NARFE web site ([www.narfe.org](http://www.narfe.org)) you can also download the individual power point presentations which were provided at the Legislative Conference as well

as watch video clips of the speech given by House Minority Whip, Steny Hoyer who encouraged us to be ***“Energized, on guard and working hard”*** as well as other speakers, such as former representative and NARFE friend Tom Davis, Representatives Gerry Connolly, and Chris Van Hollen. You can find those presentations on the Legislative Page, by clicking on the block for “2011 NARFE Legislative Conference”.

In the session on Budget Cut Threats, Dan Adcock, our Legislative Director at Headquarters made it clear that this year is poised to be the “Perfect Storm” for the federal community and we **will be fortunate** to retain our current benefits. That is why it is so important for **EVERY ONE** of us to participate whenever we are asked to do so. We know that there is apathy among our members, as we have survived all attempts by Congress to reduce our earned benefits over the past 17 years, but this year – and next year are most likely going to be very different.

Most proposals we’ve seen to date, affect federal employees - and you might say – “hey, I’m retired – it won’t affect me” .....but think back to when we were working....there were retired NARFE members who wrote letters, called Congress, and visited local offices in support of our benefits during our working years....and now it’s our turn to fight for those employees today – they could very well be our children, or grandchildren and they deserve the same benefits we now enjoy, after a career in civil service.

I want to read today’s Hot Line Message, from our National President, Joe Beaudoin, as you probably have not had a chance to read it. Dear NARFE Member, Anyone who has turned on the TV or radio in the last few days has heard about the looming shutdown of the federal government. According to OPM, the shutdown will impact 800,000 federal employees. If that is not bad enough, earlier this week, House Budget Committee chairman Paul Ryan (R-WI) introduced his proposed budget for 2012. **In short, it’s disastrous.**

**It calls for \$375 billion in cuts over 10 years for the federal family.** This budget is the clearest indication yet that Congress is planning to make federal workers and annuitants pay the price for our budget situation.

It’s more important than ever that we let our Members of Congress know that federal workers Protect America’s Heartbeat – and we will not be deficit scapegoats. **If you haven’t sent a message to your representatives yet, it’s critical that you do so now:**  
[www.ProtectAmericasHeartbeat.org](http://www.ProtectAmericasHeartbeat.org).

If you’ve already sent a letter, forward this message along to every active or retired federal employee you know, as well as their families.

Below are three things every NARFE member should know about the Ryan Budget Proposal:

1. This proposal would **reduce the pay and benefits of federal workers and annuitant by \$375 billion over the next ten years.**
2. It **extends the federal employee pay-freeze** from 2-years to 5-years.
3. It required employees (both CSRS and FERS) to **significantly increase their retirement contributions.**

**The size of the cuts to the civil service proposed by the Ryan Budget (\$375 billion over ten years) is unprecedented.** The Fiscal Deficit Commission called for \$70 billion in cuts. The above policy recommendations won't necessarily add up to \$375 billion which means that more cuts will be proposed. An idea currently discussed is creating a voucher system in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program in which we would pay a higher percentage of premiums each year to the point where **many could no longer afford health insurance.**

Every day, millions of federal employees protect America's families, land, and skies. We did not cause this current deficit, and we have already sacrificed to help fix it. **But this budget proposal calls for drastic new sacrifices that fall unfairly on federal employees.**

**Send a message to your members of Congress today – then send this email to everyone you know:** [www.ProtectAmericasHeartbeat.org](http://www.ProtectAmericasHeartbeat.org). Thank you for speaking out.

Based on the above, it is imperative that we take action NOW and be ready to take action in the future, whenever requested by our National Legislative Director through Legislative Action Alerts. Many messages have been initiated which requested that chapters take action to **create calling committees or telephone trees** through which they could contact all members of their chapter and ask them to take action. I hope that every chapter has taken action to establish a calling committee or telephone tree. It doesn't have to be one or two members making calls all day long, it can be broken down into a "buddy system" where one member calls two others – and each of those two call two others and so on until all chapter members have received a call. The member of congress will listen more when we have large numbers of constituents calling, and repeating the same message, rather than one member speaking on behalf of many members; they know that if we take the time to contact their office – we will certainly take the time to vote – and Congressmen don't want to have unhappy constituents.

We have also requested that chapters obtain email addresses from those who have email, as email is the easiest and fastest way to notify our members – and they have the ability with one click of the mouse to send a prepared message to their member of congress as well as their senators. If you have email, and don't receive messages from our Global Electronic Messaging system – GEMS – Please let me know and I will get you on the list.

It has also been suggested that we establish a Congressional District Liaison (article on Page 16 of the April magazine) in each Congressional District who would be the key person to visit or contact the local district office for the Congressman and provide information when necessary.

It is also a good idea to become recognized with the staff members by visiting their office each month and delivering a NARFE magazine. Your members may also consider working with the Congressman's staff to assist them with mailings done from the local office, or working on their campaign for re-election. It's a good way to have the name of NARFE recognized by the member of congress. And - don't forget that the Member of Congress, as well as their staff, both locally and in Washington DC are eligible for NARFE membership. At one chapter in Nevada, two of the Congressmen's local staff are NARFE members and regularly attend the meeting to give a legislative report. In CA, one Congressman, Joe Baca, believes in NARFE and is a NARFE member, as well as every member of his staff, both in CA and in Washington DC.

To refute some of the bad press we have received regarding the salary and benefits of the federal community and show the value of the federal community to the well being of the entire country, NARFE has contracted with M+R Strategic Services who has launched a media campaign, "**Protect America's Heartbeat**". The April magazine has an article on page 22 – and there was a GEMS message, as well as mention of this campaign in the NARFE Hotline messages.

Collection of personal stories from members has already begun and many will be included in the NARFE Web Site which was launched on March 8 on the non-member side of the web site. Please go to the NARFE web site, sign the petition, and complete your personal story of your federal career. M+R has also focused on building relationships with media outlets such as the Washington Post, Federal Eye, Wall Street Journal and Huffington Post to highlight the importance of the Federal worker/retiree to the nation and the community.

For those of you, without access to email – I have the **personal story form for you**. Please pick up a copy, and complete it, and return it to me during the convention. During a conference call I had on Friday, they are specifically looking for members of the federal community who worked as Park Rangers, worked for the FDA, worked in the Justice Department or served as Border Patrol Agents. As Steve Bauer mentioned, and in my own case, my Dad was a federal retiree -- please indicate whether you have a family member who is, or was, a member of the federal community, as it shows the dedication to public service often runs in families over several generations. Federal service is not just any old job – it is a commitment to our country!

There is also a **copy of the letter from the NARFE web site for you** to take home and hand write to each of your Senators, and your representative to share with them asking that the federal community not be singled out for the budget and deficit sacrifice – but we are willing to do our part.

There were presentations on March 8 made in the Rayburn House Office Building to congressional staff and coalition members, such as American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) on behalf of the federal community. Several Congressmen also spoke on

NARFE's behalf. Advocacy Training will also be available on line through a "Tool Kit" which includes samples of "letters to the editor" that can be written by chapter members to raise awareness in local communities. Brochures and handouts will also be available from headquarters.

There is a **new poster, which I have for you**, to place in areas where there may be federal employees and retirees, asking them to participate by going to the web site [www.protectamericasheartbeat.org](http://www.protectamericasheartbeat.org); we need as many of the federal community participating in this effort as possible, whether they are NARFE members or not. The more we can encourage Congress not to scapegoat the federal community – the more likely that we will not be singled out and share in the sacrifice - along with members of the private sector. We are willing to share the sacrifice, but not be the only group to sacrifice; we all understand the seriousness of the need to reduce the deficit, as it impacts future generations – but we just don't want to be singled out.

There was a session at the Legislative Conference about Grassroots Organizing given by M+R Strategic Services to raise awareness and build support for the campaign among all members which is posted on the NARFE Web Site, on the Legislative page under 2011 Legislative Conference block.

They have targeted eleven states as the "key states" to focus upon because of the significance of Senators/Congressmen and/or the committees on which they serve. The states are: Florida, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, **Nevada**, Ohio, Oklahoma, and Virginia. In addition, Missouri, Oklahoma and Virginia have many federal retirees. The Regional Vice President and Federation President of each of these states have been contacted by a member of M+R Strategic Services and are already working on plans to focus on actions to influence Senators/Congressmen in these states, obtain some media attention in these states and raise awareness about the federal community issues among residents of these states.

However, we are also asking every state to participate in these efforts to raise awareness about the federal community. During the upcoming Congressional recess, chapters are being asked to gather letters from members (**as I have for you**) which includes their own brief personal story; gather these letters in chapters, and present them in one package to the Senators during meetings with them in local offices/events during the April recess.

We know that this effort is only the beginning, and as Congress begins to introduce bills which affect the federal community; we will need money to mount an aggressive legislative campaign to fight these bills. With our declining membership, (currently 300,533) money is a concern for daily operation, which leaves little to mount a legislative campaign which will include expensive advertising. The National Executive Board authorized a fundraising campaign to raise needed funds for legislative efforts, and many of you may have already received the fund raising letters, or if not you soon will. It is not something that the NEB wanted, or liked to do, but our members have been so generous in donating funds for Alzheimer's Federal Employees

Education Assistance, cards, calendars, silver circle – that we felt it necessary to ask for your help once again in support of the fight to save your earned benefits. Any amount you can contribute will be greatly appreciated.

How many of you belong to other organizations? Perhaps church groups, Lions, Rotary....how many of you know other federal retirees who belong to these groups? How many of you carry a membership application with you – to give to a federal retiree in one of those groups? Let me tell you about my husband.... Once a month he meets with a group of retirees for lunch from the former Mare Island Naval - and always talks about NARFE – if someone in the group is not a NARFE member, he gives them an application at lunch and encourages them to join. He has been very successful in this approach...and now all of the “those retirees” are NARFE members.

How many of you know that NARFE participates in five Coalitions at HQ which generally meet on a quarterly basis? There are numerous organizations, associations and unions involved with NARFE – but they are on the East coast – miles away from your beautiful islands.

What if your members worked with those local organizations and unions?

Working closely with those organizations will give NARFE greater visibility and allow more members of the federal community to become aware of NARFEs efforts to preserve our earned benefits and join our campaign to Protect America’s Heartbeat. Working with other organizations will also increase the potential to gain new members for NARFE, and could lead to much needed recognition of NARFE through federal agencies, allowing us to participate in Health Fairs and Pre-Retirement Seminars – as both events have proven very successful in spreading the word of NARFE to federal employees – and more NARFE members will certainly help our efforts. In southern CA, the Director of the Federal Executive Board suggested that our members work the Combined Federal Campaign – as they have access to federal agencies. While you are working for the CFC – you will gain valuable contacts in the agency, for which you can make a return visit on behalf of NARFE.

As our National President stated, we are working closely with the Rural Letter Carriers Union, and their National President is a NARFE member. However, the postal service includes six other unions and management associations who are members of the coalitions with HQ. If any of you are retired postal employees and have connections with these current associations, you might ask them to place **one of these posters** on their bulletin boards in the break rooms to alert Postal federal employees about the potential to reduce their benefits. You might also try to work with them, make a presentation to them about NARFE - the more we can work together the louder the message we can deliver to Congress.

This also applies for other associations, such as Federal Managers, Federally Employed Women, Air Traffic Controllers Association, National Treasury Employees Union, a Shipyard

Employees Association – we need to spread the word throughout the federal community that we are fighting these proposed cuts and we need their help.

If there are bulletin boards, throughout the area, where you can obtain permission to place posters – **here's one for retirees** and – to encourage members to seek out your chapter meeting and learn how they can help. Senior Centers, libraries, Community Centers may give you permission to place these posters.

Now, more than ever, our benefits are at risk and we need everyone to share in the fight to preserve our earned benefits. It's up to you, and me, and everyone we can reach to identify this need. We have to be ready to call, write, visit and show Congress that the federal community is an important asset to this country – and that we will do our fair share – but we will not be the sole target for these budget cuts. As Steny Hoyer said, as he addressed the attendees at the Legislative Conference, We all need to be “***Energized, On Guard and Working Hard***”.

Note: Please contact me with any questions you have about the above forms, posters, etc.  
Helen Zajac, Region VIII VP