



A Newsletter for CA
Congressional District
Leaders and the CSFC
National Legislation
Committee

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Note: This issue is
only two pages long
due to the holidays, a
trip to Seattle and,
hey!, I'm retired!
More next month
(year, decade ☺)

In This Issue

- The Decade that was
- Seth Ickes -
Suggestions for your
next Congressional
meeting



Another year, another decade

As the Terrible Teens come to a close, permit me a backward glance to where we were 10 years ago, both as a nation and as a federal community.

In 2010 the country was just beginning its climb out of the near-depression of 2008-2009. Unemployment was at levels not seen since the 1930's and federal tax receipts had plummeted along with the economy. Paradoxically, the federal government was called on to spend much more to meet the needs of the unemployed and of states struggling with their own

deficits. As older unemployed workers chose to retire early, mandatory spending increased for Social Security and Medicare. And let's not forget the \$600 Billion stimulus package passed by Congress to revive the economy.

All this federal spending (not to mention two rounds of tax cuts a decade earlier) led to increasing annual deficits and the ballooning of the National Debt from \$5.6 Trillion in 2000 to \$13.6 Trillion in 2010 to a projected \$23 Trillion by the end of this year. To stem this red ink, Congress turned to the discretionary parts of the budget: Agency and Military spending. Budgets were frozen and even cut, though agency missions were rarely curtailed. In effect, the agencies and their employees were told to "do more with less".

Congressionally mandated sequestration called for agencies to "sequester" 6-10% of their budgets through hiring freezes, spending cuts and reductions in employee salaries & benefits. Over the course of the decade federal employees gave up over \$500 Billion in salaries and benefits, primarily through three years of 0% and four years of 1% salary increases. By the end of the decade the spending power for the average fed had slipped about 7% behind the actual cost of living.

Employee morale declined too in the face of stagnant wages & benefits and the persistence of the "do more with less" attitude. Worsening things, the current administration has shown a clear disrespect for governments workers, labeling them "bureaucrats", cavalierly eliminating/transferring positions and proposing cuts in pay & benefits. As a result, just as Boomer Feds flood the exits the government is finding it difficult to attract younger people to replace them. With plentiful jobs in the private sector, who can blame them?

I recognize that this is not a cheery note with which to end the year but these are not cheery times. Government is under threat in a number of ways. As CDLs our responsibility is to speak to Congress in favor of Feds, both active and retired. Given events of the past decade, it seems to me that the status of active employees deserves our increased attention.

Cheers & Happy Holidays,
Steve

**Legislative ideas for
your next meeting with
your Congressman**

Before Thanksgiving CDL **Gaylin Zeigler** wrote me and NARFE Advocacy member **Seth Ickes** asking for suggestions on pending legislation that he could bring up at his upcoming meeting with his Congressman. I suggested he mention that active Feds should receive the same 3.1% raise that Congress had just included for the military in their continuing resolution.

Seth had a much more complete view of both the raise and other issues that NARFE is supporting. In particular he scores points by suggesting Gaylin thank the Rep for his support of related legislation, something I often forget to do.

Seth's suggestions were so well thought out and well presented that I wanted to share them with you all to keep in mind as you plan your next meetings with your Congressman. With Seth's permission here they are ----->

Seth Ickes
NARFE
Grassroots Assistant, Advocacy

1. The pay raise would be a great topic to bring up, and I would specifically check if your representative has voted in favor of the House's [Financial Services and General Government \(FSGG\) spending bill](#), which included a 3.1 percent average pay raise for federal employees and blocked the OPM reorganization plan. Additionally, I would check if they supported the [National Defense Authorization Act \(NDAA\)](#) which includes a paid parental leave provision for federal employees and also blocks the OPM reorganization plan. If they did support these bills, you should thank them, and if they did not I would ask for their support of a 3.1 percent pay raise and a paid parental leave provision for federal employees.

If you are meeting with your senator, I would ask them to support both provisions.

2. I recommend checking if your Representative has co-sponsored [the Fair COLA for Seniors Act, H.R. 1553](#). If they have co-sponsored the bill thank them, and if they have yet to do so ask for their co-sponsorship. The bill would [require the use of the Consumer Price Index for the Elderly \(CPI-E\)](#) to determine more accurate COLAs for seniors and veterans. Currently, COLAs are calculated using the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage and Clerical Workers (CPI-W). However, the CPI-E better accounts for the spending habits of seniors, especially on medicine, health care, shelter, and other costs. Using the CPI-E to determine COLAs for federal annuitants and Social Security beneficiaries [would increase COLAs by an estimated 0.27 percentage points per year](#).

I would also ask the Representative, regardless of co-sponsorship status, to ensure any legislation that changes COLAs to the CPI-E includes federal employees, in addition to social security beneficiaries. Here is a link to an [issue brief that covers the legislation](#) in detail, which you can feel free to give your Representative a copy of.

I would also ask (or thank them) for your representative's co-sponsorship of both the Rep. Kevin Brady, R-TX, bill [H.R. 4540, the Equal Treatment of Public Servants Act](#), and Rep. Richard Neal's, D-MA, bill [H.R. 3934 the Equal Treatment of Public Servants Act](#). These WEP reform bills, similar in their framework but with some key differences, would provide relief of the Windfall Elimination Provision for both current and future retirees.

I would also ask your Representative to work with his or her colleagues to move forward on a legislative compromise on WEP reform, rather than the two competing reform bills mentioned above. You can learn more about the bills [here](#), and I would recommend bringing a copy of this issue brief with you to your meeting.

If you have any questions about the above points, feel free to send me an email at sickes@narfe.org. Happy holiday