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memo

National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association (NARFE)

To: NARFE National Executive Board
From: Jessica Klement, Staff VP, Advocacy
CC: Barb Sido, Executive Director
Date: February 26, 2018
Re: Advocacy Update

This memorandum serves as an update for the National Executive Board regarding the NARFE Advocacy Department's key areas of focus.

National Journal Network Science Initiative

To refresh your memory, NARFE partnered with the National Journal Network Science Initiative (NSI) team to conduct a comprehensive analysis of key stakeholders and influencers involved in shaping public perception of federal employees and retirees to help NARFE anticipate, prepare for, and influence emerging debates, particularly those around compensation and benefits and the size of government. The purpose of the research is to identify stakeholder communities to engage in order to influence and proactively shape conversations that enhance the image of federal workers and promote what they do for America.

Following several meetings internally and with the NSI team, our path forward in the research plan will focus on a combination of allies and detractors.

NSI research will start with confirmed and suspected detractors, including but not limited to: conservative think tanks and academics; conservative advocacy groups; and media voices. In examining detractors, NSI will examine their core messaging regarding federal employee myths and motivations for studying federal workforce issues, among others. From there, NSI will conduct an analysis of the detractors' networks, including ties to policymakers, media, and regional connections in areas we select.

In assessing assured or potential NARFE allies, NSI will specifically study the following sets of stakeholders: centrist and allied think tanks and academics; nonprofits, particularly with a public service-oriented mission; federal contractors and other businesses with regular government connections; and quiet and nascent allies from think tanks, non-profits, and major businesses. As NSI examines these groups, it will look at their motivations for working on federal workforce issues and identify specific opportunities for collaboration. As it will do for the detractor network, NSI will also examine how allies connect to policymakers, media and the geographic areas we select.

A research plan will be provided to the NARFE team in early March, and preliminary findings will be shared mid-April.

Policy and Lobbying Update

NARFE's lobbying team is focused on two main issues: (i) opposing cuts to federal benefits; and (ii) opposing mandatory Medicare enrollment for postal retirees in H.R. 756.

The president recently signed a two-year bipartisan budget agreement that sets overall spending numbers for FY18 and FY19. In doing so, the bill increased spending by nearly \$300 billion, only \$100 billion of which was offset. Offsets always are, and will continue to be, a primary concern for NARFE as the federal community is viewed as a piggy bank. We notched our first legislative win for 2018 in February when none of the offsets came from federal employees or retirees.

So while we live to fight another day, the fight continues. The administration's FY19 budget to Congress included at least \$192 billion in cuts to federal pay and benefits (we're still working with OMB on exact numbers and understanding of specific proposals). The budget contains most of the provisions from the FY18 budget as well as TSP changes and a federal pay freeze for 2019, which the president has the authority to implement absent congressional action.

As Congress debates the budget, infrastructure investments and other priorities, NARFE will be continuing its drumbeat: federal employees and retirees have given enough and should not have to pay for other priorities. Given the truncated congressional calendar because of the 2018 midterm elections, I do not expect Congress to make notable progress on any major initiatives.

NARFE's team is also continuing to lobby in opposition to the current postal reform bill, H.R. 756, which would force current and future postal retirees into Medicare. NARFE objects to this precedent-setting changing of benefits in retirement. Due to the Medicare provision, two additional House committees have jurisdiction over the bill, and NARFE is continuing its lobbying efforts on those committees. At this point, it seems unlikely postal reform will move at all this year, let alone in its current form.

Due to the likely lack of action on the Hill on NARFE priorities, the NARFE lobbyists will have time to carry out many of the objectives laid out in the operating plan, notably building and strengthening relationships. We began preliminary conversations with the

leadership of the Republican Main Street Caucus and are continuing to strengthen relationships with the usual suspects.

We are in the beginning stages of narrowing a list of 50-75 members of Congress to build or strengthen relationships with those offices. Responsibilities will then be divided among the lobbyists. From there, we will employ a “scorecard” to assess if those relationships have advanced NARFE’s priorities. Within NARFE-PAC, the lobbyists are assigned to the party committees and other political events to further relationships.

Grassroots Update

The upcoming federation conferences/conventions provide opportunities to address many of the goals laid out in operating plan on grassroots advocacy. Additionally, Molly has had direct contact with federations just starting to promote the value of CDLs and are interested in forming their own programs. Florida is a state worth acknowledging, as its leadership made this a priority and Molly presented to each of its eight areas.

Overall, there was an increased interest in grassroots activity from first-time users of the Legislative Action Center in 2017. We are working to identify those individuals and get them further engaged in upcoming grassroots campaigns and NARFE.

Ross Apter started in earnest on capturing NARFE federation state advocacy programs, priorities and capabilities. In the January issue of the *Insider*, Ross requested information from federations on their state programs, and a larger survey to assess capabilities was sent towards the end of February.