

THE VOICE OF THE CALIFORNIA FEDERATION

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2019



THE JOY OF VOLUNTEERING

Our Association is made up of members who volunteer to advocate for legislation that is beneficial to the Federal Community. We volunteer to visit our Congressman as a group to specifically identify legislation that is detrimental to the Federal Community and along with the other members of our group, generally convince the Congressman to support our positions.

Prior to becoming a member of NARFE, we probably never thought of visiting our Congressman by ourselves. But with 2 – 4 other NARFE members, we feel comfortable visiting and speaking to our Congressman. After the meeting, we feel a certain amount of pleasure and joy knowing that we just talked with our Member of Congress and in most cases got him/her to side with our position. WOW! I did that as a volunteer!

During our membership in NARFE we volunteer to take on leadership roles and usually find that experience rather rewarding in knowing that we contributed to the success of our chapter or Standing Committee. Every other year we have the opportunity to participate in the Legislative Conference, learn specific legislative advocacy and visit our Congressman on Capitol Hill which is an adventure in itself.

Having been an active member of NARFE for the past 27 years, I still feel the joy in knowing that, however small my contribution, it helped in preserving the earned benefits of the Federal Community. Just consider the federal retiree; the retiree has not lost any benefit since the so called “Diet COLA” in the early 1990’s. That is almost three decades of fighting Congress when they proposed benefit reductions in order to reduce the federal deficit. Three decades of NARFE successfully preventing any reductions in the federal retiree’s benefits. I feel great pride in knowing that I volunteered to write letters, emails, make phone calls and visited my Congressman and his/her staff which resulted in no losses to the retirees.

Please join with me in the Joy of Volunteering.

Lea Zajac, Federation President

Please note, based on comments received from the survey questions in the previous issue of the Federation Newsletter, there are topics in this issue that were requested. We will continue to address a variety of topics as you requested in subsequent issues. Thank you for your support and interest in our quarterly issues of the Federation Newsletter.

Lea Zajac, CA Federation President.

CA FEDERATION CONVENTION

Our biennial convention is scheduled for April 24-25, 2019 in San Diego, CA at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. We negotiated a terrific price, for CA, of \$118 plus tax for lodging which includes full hot breakfast for two people in a room (a \$40 value), free Wi-Fi access in each room, and coffee in each room.

Convention Call material and Information can be obtained at www.csfcnarfe.org/convention



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TSP REQUIRED MINIMUM DISTRIBUTION (RMD) A CAUTIONARY TALE

By Linda Ingram, District VIII V.P.

In 2018 I turned 70 then 70 ½. I had not accessed my TSP so I began researching the requirements to take my RMD and the possible tax implications. Here's what I learned.

- The TSP program emphasizes that you have until April 1 of the year after you turn 70 ½ to take the first RMD, known as the Required Beginning Date (RBD). What is not clear in the brochures is that even though you can delay the first RMD into the next year, you also have to take that year's distribution by Dec 31. That means you wind up with two distributions in one year. Depending on your income and tax situation it could push you into a higher tax bracket and higher Medicare Part B premium level.
- Despite the pending changes in the TSP program I would still need to make decisions under the old rules until the end of 2019 when the new rules come into effect.

A few months before I turned 70 ½ I contacted the TSP program to understand what steps I needed to take to make sure that I began taking withdrawals to satisfy my RMD requirements. The first confusion was that the form I needed to fill out was the Full Withdrawal Form even though I was setting up a periodic payment schedule. I talked to a helpful representative who guided me through the steps to fill out the form, direct payments to my financial institution, and set up the tax withholding for my RMD.

Perfect! I had done what I needed to get this process going. I had set up monthly minimum payments and that process was working. To my understanding in the month of December I should have had an amount equal to the remainder of my required RMD deposited into my account. Instead I saw the same minimum payment show up. This is when it got frustrating.

I called the TSP and talked to a representative who informed me that, despite what I had been led to believe, I would not receive the remaining RMD distribution until some time in March 2019. I explained that was not what I wanted nor was it what I expected. She kept referring me to language that talks about the RBD of April 1, saying that they did not need to distribute the funds till that date. I informed her that the delay of distribution till 2019 would have serious tax implications for me. The conversation was futile.

I do not know if I could have done anything to affect a different outcome in my situation. But I do have some advice. Do your research on the tax implications of waiting until the next year to take your first RMD. You will have more flexibility under the new TSP rules to take a distribution in the RMD year because multiple partial withdrawals will be allowed. And start early to discuss your options!

NARFE-PAC INFORMATION & REQUIREMENTS WHY CONTRIBUTE?

By James Mathews, Executive Vice President

NARFE-PAC is the most effective and direct method for individual members to achieve the primary goal of NARFE...to influence Congress to protect & improve our earned benefits. The funds contributed are used to support candidates that support the NARFE Legislative Agenda. By contributing to candidate's election campaigns, NARFE gains access & influence. Once elected, legislators remember who helped them.

While I made many one-time contributions to NARFE-PAC over the years, about 8 years ago at a national convention, I decided to become a sustaining member. Once I signed up, my support is automatic and substantial. The funds I contribute, are combined the funds of many others. Together, we give NARFE the resources to make our presence known and our voices heard. These funds allow our members to attend fund raisers and have face to face contact with the candidates and their staffs.

NARFE-PAC does not favor any political party. It is directed at congressional candidates only. We support candidates who support our legislative agenda. A candidate seeking NARFE-PAC funds will have his/her record evaluated. With input from federations, the NARFE-PAC board, made up of 2 National Officers and the Staff Vice-President for Advocacy, distribute the funds where they will do the most good.

The NARFE-PAC contribution form is simple to fill out and can be a one time contribution or a sustaining member with monthly contributions from a credit card. The minimum amount for sustaining members is just \$10 per month. The goal of raising 1.25 million dollars during the 2019-2020 election cycle is ambitious. I urge you to contribute towards this important cause.

Dues Withholding Raffle

Drawing will occur at the convention---do not need to be present to win. All CSFC Chapter Members, who are on Dues Withholding, will have their names placed in a container (even those who sign-up at the convention) and one name will be drawn for a \$250 prize.

THE HISTORY AND VALUE OF NARFE

By Dottie Schmidt, District VI V.P.

If you ever ask yourself these questions – “Why should I belong to NARFE” or “What has NARFE done for me”, maybe you should look at the history of the organization and why it came into being in the first place.

Federal Civil Service was established by Congress in 1883. Thirty-seven years later the Civil Service Retirement Act was passed by Congress with a maximum annuity of \$720 per year. Civil service annuities were capped at \$60 per month.

In February 1921, 14 federal retirees – all pretty smart guys - got together in Washington and organized the National Association of Retired Civil Employees (NARCE), with the goal to improve retirement benefits. Dues were \$1.00. Things started happening pretty fast with NARCE support. In 1922 Congress authorized annuities for involuntary separation for those with 15 years of service and age 55. In 1926 Congress increased the maximum annuity to \$1,000/year. Survivor annuities began in 1939 and in 1942 Congress established a retirement at 55 years of age and 30 years of service.

NARFE’s bylaws were changed in 1947 allowing chapters to be established. The California Federation was chartered on August 25, 1950, and the first four chapters in the federation were Los Angeles Chapter 3, San Diego Chapter 4, Pasadena Chapter 10 and Long Beach Chapter 21.

FEHBP was enacted by Congress in 1959 to provide health coverage for federal workers and their families. Cost of Living Adjustments (COLAs) went into effect in 1962. In 1970 NARCE became NARFE.

Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) was established in 1984, whereby all employees hired after December 31, 1983, automatically were covered under FERS and Social Security, not the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS). In 1986 National dues increased to \$12 per year and by-laws changed making chapter membership mandatory. In 2016 mandatory chapter membership was repealed.

Since 1921, thousands of voices belonging to NARFE members, contacting Senators and Representatives, have been instrumental in protecting the earned benefits of federal employees and retirees. Though NARFE is a grass roots organization, the staff at NARFE HQ does a great job keeping track of members coming and going, distributing chapter dues and informing the federations and chapters of congressional business. They maintain a website that is updated daily. Let’s not forget the award winning NARFE magazine that we receive each month, which has information for everyone.

BUT, NARFE wouldn’t be NARFE without the dedication of its members. There is no doubt our voices – the letters we write, the calls we make, visits to our legislators’ offices, along with the reliable work of NARFE’s legislative staff who go to Capitol Hill on a regular basis - have made it possible for our earned benefits to be preserved. I believe, and hope you will agree, that NARFE has been extremely valuable over the 98 years it has been in existence.

One voice by itself is barely heard in the wilderness. Thousands of voices, joined together through NARFE, are heard loudly and clearly by our Representatives and Senators. Whatever you do, always **LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD!**

HOW TO MAKE YOUR CONGRESSPERSON BELIEVE THAT NARFE IS AN IMPORTANT CONSTITUENT

By Jerry Hall, District V V.P.

First, find out who your Congressional District leader is. If you don’t have one, then contact your District VP and tell them you want to be the CDL for your Congressperson. If there is one, contact the CDL (you can find out who it is on the Federation Website, at www.csfnarfe.org or ask your District VP). A CDL needs a team, people from the local chapter(s), and folks who simply are NARFE members and reside in the Congressional District. Now what? The CDL team can now make a “name for itself.” Your congressperson will know you and who NARFE is if you follow most of the following approaches. 1. Make an appointment to see the congressperson or at least their local representative at least twice a year. 2. Show up once a month at the office to drop off a copy of the NARFE magazine and the Chapter newsletter and meet the staff, be friendly. 3. Invite the Congressperson (or local rep) to attend a local Chapter meeting or luncheon. 4. Develop a relationship with the Congressperson or representative by going to any and every event you learn about in the District and be prepared to ask a question about an issue that affects NARFE members or federal active and retired employees. 5. Always be present at events and activities where the Congressperson or representative attends and make sure you introduce yourself and your team. Tell the Congressperson you appreciate their support for federal employees and retirees and the commitment and dedication they give to our country. If they have not been so supportive, suggest that there are more than 500,000 retirees and workers in California who need their support. Eventually, your congressperson will believe that NARFE and federal retirees and workers are an important constituent that they need to pay attention to. They will know who you are and who NARFE is and why NARFE is important to their re-election. 6. Never give up and keep a positive attitude toward your Congressperson, making them aware of their federal constituents.

IMPORTANCE IN HAVING A SERVICE OFFICER, *by Mary Venerable, District III V.P.*

Chapter Service Officers have two major duties:

1 - Meet the practical needs of chapter members which includes helping individual chapter members, their families and survivors take the proper actions to obtain and retain their annuities and survivor, health, long term care, and federal group life insurance benefits; provide emotional support to members having serious problems with their benefit arrangement and particularly to surviving spouses when they suffer the trauma of a death or serious illness.

2 - Facilitate liaisons between members and OPM that includes assisting members with problems involving programs managed by OPM and to facilitate communication between the two. Members, families and survivors frequently need help in correctly preparing and forwarding the reports and forms required for their claims. The Service Officer can enhance the service program by frequently reviewing useful information at chapter meetings and in chapter newsletters.

Now we have only a handful of active Chapter Service Officers. We have only 74 Chapters, which means that there are many chapters operating without a Service Officer and not assisting their members in a time of need. This fact is a concern of the Federation and the Service Committee Chair.

The Federation has taken steps to establish a system to make important information available to our members, which will be established in July 2019. Plans call for the appointment and training of a Service Committee member in each of the nine districts of our Federation. Members in their District for questions regarding retirement benefits will then designate the Committee members at the first contact. If the District representative cannot answer the question(s), the Chair of the Service Committee will then be contacted.

This new procedure is available to all Chapters, however, those Chapters who are fortunate to have an active and responsive Service Officer, will continue to contact their Chapter Service Officer with questions.

Chapter members are reminded of the availability of telephone numbers and email addresses to obtain need benefits information. Examples are as follows:

To reach a Federal Benefits Specialist: email = fedbenefits@narfe.org

NARFE at Your Service: 1-80-456-8410 Option 2 for Federal benefits Institute

Mail: NARFE Headquarters – Attn: Federal Benefits

Don't allow a members question to go unanswered.

SOS *By Yoggi Riley, CA Federation Treasurer*

The California Postal Employees Legislative Coalition met the weekend of February 10, 2019 in Sacramento, CA. This is a coalition has been around for 21 years and is made up of members from NALC, APWU, Mailhandlers, Rural Carriers, National Association of Postal Supervisors, National Association of Postmasters, NARFE, and the American Federation of Government Employees. The goals of this coalition are to meet the USPS challenges, educate our representatives about the USPS, become contacts for elected officials, attack and respond to any anti-USPS legislation, improve our working relationships as USPS employees and retirees, and partner with federal sector government employees.

There is no doubt this is a unique group with benefits that are much different than many Americans in the private sector. You may think this is a bit out of the ordinary since on the workroom floor we all have different roles to play with our employment including the retirees. Retirees may not be working alongside of you receiving a paycheck every two weeks but we are all in this together to maintain our benefits and protect our jobs and the existence of our employer the USPS. You cannot have an attitude that you just don't give a hoot, as your work with the service is very important to the continued success and need for a postal service. There are many folks in this country that would like to see the USPS fail and turn it over to private industry. That is a private industry that will take parts of the service and make a business. It would not be a universal service to every American in every nook and cranny of this country. We cannot let our legislators slice and dice up the services the USPS offers to every citizen of this country. For the good of all we must rise above and all come together in a civilized fashion to talk about our needs and goals. That is what was exhibited at this week's coalition meeting and very meeting of this group.

The House Committee on Oversight and Reform (OR) has announced its membership for the 116th Congress. The OR committee is the main investigative committee in the House of Representatives that has jurisdiction over federal employees, government operations, health care, information technology, interior, energy, environment, national security and intergovernmental affairs. There are 42 members on this committee and 6 of those members are representatives from California. Just because you may have worked on a campaign during the election cycle last November does not mean that any representative understands your concerns. It is our job to educate our legislators on what the important issues are for us all. We must all do this by writing letters, making phone calls, sending email messages or even visiting the Congressman's office to explain why we need support for certain pieces of legislation. If they talk about privatizing the PO, then we all need to scream out to our legislators. If they want to take away part of your retirement, then we need to react and write a letter. We just need our voices to be heard to share or views.

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As you may realize after each Congress ends any unfinished business dies and you must start all over again to introduce new legislation to be acted upon by the new members of Congress. It may seem like you heard the message before but it comes back up and we must react all over again. If we sit by idle, we may allow bills to be passed without ever screaming out to your legislators on how you will be affected. The voices of all groups participating in the coalition meeting were unified with the following issues.

HR 33 Keep the USPS independent and do not privatize the Post Office

HR 60 Return the service standards of 2012.

HR 54 Maintain six day mail delivery

HR 23 Door to door delivery - Take all appropriate measures to ensure the continuation of door delivery for all business and residential customers

Other issues and bills not newly numbered were discussed and they include the need to have a new version of Postal Reform Act Postal reform legislation which should solve the disastrous pre-funding mandate while at the same time treating our retirees fairly. The bill would also allow the Postal Service to modestly raise postage rates immediately, generating roughly an additional one-billion dollars in annual revenue, Social Security Fairness Act – elimination of the GPO and WEP provisions, and a bill to protect manager's appeal right to MSPB.

The National Active Retired Federal Employees (NARFE) association was present in support of all federal workers. NARFE did voice some strong objection to the past postal reform bill proposed because of the forced mandate to have all Medicare eligible postal retirees be required to pay Medicare B premiums. NARFE has lobbied for the optional personal choice of a retiree to join or not join. This was a great strain but the overall picture of both sides must always be reviewed. Hopefully in the new Congress this point can be modified to the liking of all parties because of the strong opposition to forced Medicare integration. I may be a postal retiree but I certainly understand the fight by NARFE to keep the personal option available for postal retirees and any other federal retiree in the future.

**** RETIREMENT THOUGHTS ****

While talking to many retiring employees the issue of taking Medicare B and keeping their FEHB plan always becomes a dilemma. Many decide to remain covered by both their health plan and Medicare A & B. Some decide to stay under Medicare A & B alone. The one point you should always remember is: it is better to SUSPEND YOUR FEHB if you want Medicare A & B coverage only. DO NOT DROP YOUR FEHB at retirement because you can never go back and regain coverage if you need to. Once you make a decision to drop your federal health plan, it will be gone forever. If you suspend your FEHB, it will be

set aside and stay available for you to regain at a later date. There is no time limit for this. You may remain perfectly content with your Medicare A & B coverage and that is fine as it is your personal choice.

There is another consideration if you should decide not to pick up your Medicare B option. You must also realize that if you choose to not pick up your Medicare B option, you can be faced with a 10% penalty for every year that you have delayed joining Medicare once you were eligible to start Medicare B coverage. That is at age 65 or it could be later if you do not retire until well after age 65.

If you are still working and have reached age 65, you do not need to make a choice to start Medicare B coverage. You are allowed to remain under your FEHB coverage alone and are not required to pay any Medicare B premiums until you make the move to retire. This is due to the fact that Medicare cannot become your primary coverage until you are retired. Your FEHB would remain your primary coverage until you retire. These are just a couple of points that have come up time and time again for those about to turn 65 and are wondering about their Medicare B choices. If you are unclear ask questions or call the Social Security office for more information on Medicare. (MEDICARE - Social Security Administration 1-800-772-1213 or by internet at: www.mymedicare.gov)

Until the next time Happy Saint Patrick's Day and be safe. Watch out for all those little leprechauns. Stay warm and be well. Hope to see you all at the State convention in San Diego.

Region VIII Vice President, Helen Zajac

NEWLY PRINTED MEMBERSHIP MATERIALS:

The **National Bylaws Booklets** (FH-4) are in print, and available to order from National Headquarters on the F-18, Requisition for Printed Supplies. All these materials are free and will be sent directly to your door.

The **Chapter Development Manual**, A Guide to Maintaining a Vibrant Chapter, FH-15, has just been issued. This manual is a direct result of the efforts of the 2018 Marketing and Member Resources Advisory Committee, chaired by District V Vice President Jerry Hall. **Kudos Jerry!**

NARFE chapters have a long and important history. Serving as the local contact for the federal community, NARFE chapters provide critical grassroots support for the national legislative agenda and keep members informed on relevant state and local issues of interest. NARFE's chapters provide a way to unite federal employees, retirees, their spouses and surviving spouses throughout your community.

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Region VIII Vice President, *continued from page 5*

Opportunities abound for members to get involved in leadership governance and volunteer activities, as well as make lasting friendships. This book provides information regarding meeting time/place, meeting with other nearby chapters, ideas for speakers/facilitators, workshops, communications, phone calls, a chapter website, social media, advertising opportunities, Matching Funds, Membership Survey Sample, and a Chapter Self-Assessment to see if your members are receiving value from chapter meetings in exchange for their dues, time and effort.

Other new materials are:

Flyer – **NARFE Webinars**, Answers for the Federal Community, F-1, (12/18) - This identifies that NARFE has webinars. Post these where Active Federal Employees may see them.

Flyer – **NARFE Webinars**, Answers for the Federal Community, F-2, (Valid through 1/24/19) - This provides specific dates and times for webinars and will be updated periodically. Post these where Active Federal Employees may see them.

Public Relations Handbook, For NARFE Chapters and Federations, FH-9, (11/18)

NARFE Community Relations Guide, FH-11 (11/18) - This suggests ways that the chapters can expand awareness of who Feds are and why they matter by participating in local events. Getting to know your local media is extremely important. Your chapter may consider participating in a local Alzheimer Walk/Run (get matching NARFE shirts to stand out in the crowd), participate with Veteran's, (many veteran's become Civil Servants), speak at High School or College Government Classes about Federal jobs, attend community career fairs to showcase the value of being a federal employee, make presentations to local civic organizations about NARFE, raise money for a local animal shelter, raise money for a local sports team – make sure to get a picture for the local newspaper. All of these things bring recognition of the NARFE name to members of the community, which may include members of the Federal Community.

Membership Marketing Manual, A How-To Guide for Recruiting NARFE Members, FH-19 (10/18)

Pop Quiz on Federal Benefits, F-123 (10/18)

10 Worst Mistakes Federal Employees Can Make, F-126 (10/18)

10 Worst Mistakes Federal Retirees Can Make, F-127 (10/18)

All these documents are designed to offer best practices and how-to resources that can be used at every level of the Association.

Don't forget the **NARFE Dues Withholding Program**, F-86 (04/18). Retirees can participate in Dues Withholding and save 15% on their national dues and never send another dues payment again! National Membership Dues are \$34, plus chapter dues, divided by 12 which equals about \$3 - \$4 withheld from your monthly annuity. A one time sign up and you will always be a NARFE National and Chapter dues paying Member, saving \$6.00 on your National Dues!

Financial Assistance for Furloughed and Exempted Feds

FEEA and NARFE partnered to offer \$100 grants to active federal employees, who are NARFE members, who did not receive a paycheck during the government shutdown. Thanks to your support, 412 NARFE/FEEA grants were provided to assist federal employees.

MEMBERSHIP: At the end of the year, NARFE had a total membership of 200,982. There are 988 Chapters. California has 9,881 Chapter Members and 6,904 National Only Members. Nationally, New Members recruited averaged 859/month; Reinstatements averaged 832/month; Deaths averaged 482/month and Dropped for Non-Payment of Dues averaged 1,909/month.

Recruitment Contest September-December 2018: 952 new members were recruited by 531 recruiters. In California, 38 members recruited 107 new members. Chapter 1496 recruited the most new members: 39. Yoggi Riley individually recruited the most new members: 18. For information the 2017 Contest recruited 1,094 new members and the 2016 Contest recruited 931 new members.

Dues for Supporting Members: With the establishment of "Supporting Member" category, the NEB voted to set the dues at \$40.00.

Preretirement Seminar for all current federal employees will be held April 22, 2019 in San Diego.

The seminar will cover federal benefits for both CSRS and FERS employees. \$45 per registrant (which will include one year of membership in NARFE or \$5 if already a member).

For more information visit www.csfnarfe.org/prsregistration