

POINTS TO PONDER #2017-2

Role of a National Member – 8/25/17

In 2011 the National Executive Board (NEB) developed an incentive program which would encourage Active Federal Employees (AFE) to join NARFE. This incentive program was called the “Electronic Chapter” or eChapter for short. The thought behind this was that since AFE’s in most cases, could not attend Chapter meetings, and nearly all AFEs were computer literate, NARFE could offer them a membership where they could communicate electronically through a Blog that was operated by HQs. They would have no chapter dues (only \$40 Association dues) and the only officer they would have was a President who was a Director at HQ.

This program appealed to the AFEs and took off at a rapid pace. About 600 AFEs joined NARFE the first year. By the second year, over 1,500 joined and the eChapter continued to grow at a rapid rate.

Now that we officially had a new chapter that did not require chapter dues HQs began contacting previous members, who had dropped their chapter membership for a variety of reasons, and offered them a \$40 Association membership in the eChapter where they would not be contacted by their previous chapter to renew their membership. HQ contacted previous chapter members as far back as 2005 and convinced many to reinstate in the eChapter. The Reinstatement Program was so successful that after a couple more years, the eChapter grew to about a 10,000 membership.

Furthermore, because the NARFE Bylaws state that a member can join any Chapter of their choice, many members of Traditional Chapters transferred into the eChapter even though many did not have email capability. In addition, as HQs recruited new members they arbitrarily assigned them to the eChapter.

As NARFE continued to enroll AFE’s, continued to reinstate previously dropped members, continued to assign newly recruited members, and continued to allow traditional chapter members to transfer, the eChapter membership grew to 33,000 in 2014. Wow! The eChapter “incentive program” was considered to be a remarkable success. The downside of the program was that the eChapter members wanted no contact with the traditional chapters. Thus, the names and addresses of eChapter members were secretly maintained at HQs.

At the 2016 National Convention in Reno, NV. The delegates approved two Bylaw changes of “One Member, One Vote” (OMOV) which meant that every member would have a vote (including the eChapter members) in lieu of one Voting Representative voting for all the members of their respective chapter. The other Bylaw change was allowing “Optional Chapter Membership” which rescinded the Bylaw change of 1986 that made chapter membership mandatory for new members. When these Bylaw changes were adopted, primarily because of the Optional Chapter Membership, the NEB rescinded their “incentive program” for an eChapter, which resulted in the eChapter members, along with the “Grandfathered National Only Members (LSA members) and the non-voting Life Members, becoming a National Division.

Every Federation suddenly had a National Division in addition to their chapters. The National Division is composed of those members who reside in their respective State. The CA Federation currently has about 5,000 members in the National Division. Ten percent of the dues paid by these members is returned to the federation to pay for programs that support the National members, such as training, attending National Conventions, attending Legislative Conference, visiting their Congressman, etc.

Therefore, the members of the National Division are members of the Federation to the same degree as Chapter Members. The only distinction is that Chapter Members pay per capita dues that support a biennial Federation Convention and support chapter officer training in the non-convention years. National Division members do not currently participate in these two events.

Till Next Time,
Lea Zajac
CA Federation President