

January 2019



NARFE Chapter 356
PO Box 1682
Manassas, VA 20108-1682

Email: narfe356@hotmail.com

**Next Meeting Date
January 16, 2019**

*Hibachi Buffet & Sushi
Grill at
8121 Sudley Road,
Manassas, VA*

**Buffet Lunch -
11:30 AM
Program at
12:15 PM**

Hibachi Buffet is located in the Westgate Shopping Center, next door to the Barnes and Noble Book Store.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

In case of inclement weather, we will follow the plans for Prince William County schools.

- ♦ If schools are closed, the meeting will be canceled.
- ♦ If schools are opening late, we will hold our meeting as usual.

Future Meetings:

February 20—Senior Safety, I.S. Bakalov, Master Deputy, Prince William County Sheriffs Dept.

Our Chapter's Executive Committee meets on the first Tuesday of each month, except July, at the Manassas Senior Center at 1:00 p.m. All members are welcome to attend.

MANASSAS CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

NARFE Chapter 356, Manassas, VA - Organized September 9, 1953

Manassas Museum System, Doug Horhota, Museum Programs Coordinator

Operated by the City of Manassas, the Manassas Museum, founded in 1974, features permanent and temporary historical exhibits that interpret Northern Virginia Piedmont history through artifacts, documents, videos, and images. Echoes, the museum store, offers a variety of distinctive gifts with a local flair. The museum system also maintains several historic sites in the City of Manassas.

Mr. Horhota has been the Museum Program Coordinator since August 2012. Previously, he was the Living History Supervisor at St. Mary's College of Maryland, home of the state's first capital. Prior to that, he was a Historical Interpreter at Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

He received his BA in Political Science at Rutgers, and a Masters in US History from Montclair State University. He is now working towards a PhD in Public Policy from University of Maryland.

From The Chapter President

Happy New Year!

We held an auction for Alzheimer's at our December 19 annual holiday and Christmas Party meeting. We auctioned off flower arrangements provided by Flower Gallery and cheese and crackers as well as candies and other gifts. Our Program Chairman, Priscilla Saboe, provided jars of delicious candies at each table so people seated there could guess the number of candies in each jar. We raised \$310 for Alzheimer's in the auction. Everyone had a good time and we raised another \$140 for Alzheimer's in contributions. We have now already surpassed our goal of \$400 for Alzheimer's this fiscal year.

Our attendance has increased, members are coming from farther away and we have new members also attending. My thanks for our executive committee and our members for this

increased interest.

I recently learned that the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, as it is called, provides that moving expense reimbursements are includable in income, but the moving expenses are not deductible. This has a significant impact on federal employees. In order to serve our country, federal employees move all over the country and even all over the world to perform a variety of crucial tasks. Sometimes employees in faraway places are exposed to great danger, and sometimes even in offices here in the United States federal employees are exposed to danger. Moving expenses and reimbursements can be for significant amounts of money. Income taxes on reimbursements without deductibility of expenses is unfair to our federal civilian employees. Let your Senators, Congressmen, and legislative liaison know your opinions.

Our new National NARFE President, Kenneth J. Thomas, noted that Congress has created a framework constantly discussing cutting the deficit, which would place federal employees and annuitants squarely in the crosshairs by threatening to furlough federal employees, cutting the services they provide, and proposing changes to the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) program that would cost you more. Our message to Congress couldn't be simpler; "Don't balance the federal budget on the backs of active and retired federal workers." As NARFE's President, the first priority of President Thomas is strong advocacy on Capitol Hill. One way to support President Thomas is to attend Legcon19, March 10-13 in Alexandria, Virginia.

Joe Powell
Chapter President

Legislation Update

Items of Interest from December NARFE News Releases

Federal Shutdown Updates on NARFE Shutdown Central

NARFE has created a Shutdown Central page on its website that will be updated as events unfold.

As of Friday, December 28, Congressional leaders and the White House appeared to be at an impasse on moving forward with funding a portion of the government, all but ensuring this partial government shutdown stretches into January when the new 116th Congress convenes on January 3rd.

With Congressional failure to pass government funding, several federal departments and agencies are now closed. “Non-excepted” (non-essential) federal employees will be forced to stay home without any promise of back pay. Some departments and agencies have received full fiscal year 2019 funding and are not affected by the shutdown. These departments are: Labor, Energy, Defense, Health and Human Services, Education and Veterans Affairs as well as the Social Security Administration and other independent agencies.

The Office of Personnel Management’s Furlough Guidance [webpage](#) contains information for furloughed workers, including new sample letters for creditors, mortgage lenders and landlords in the event you are unable to pay your bills in early January.

NARFE members are encouraged to tell their stories on how the shutdown is affecting them by emailing advocacy@narfe.org and using the hashtag #ShutdownStories on social media.

Postal System Task Force Recommendations Released

On December 4, the Trump administration’s Task Force on the U.S. Postal System finally released its long-awaited [report](#) to the public. NARFE

appreciated the opportunity to participate and share its concerns with the Task Force over the summer as a representative of postal employees and retirees. Citing mail revenue declines, increasing liabilities and a failing business model, Task Force members issued a series of recommendations to reach U.S. Postal Service (USPS) financial sustainability.

To its credit, despite full knowledge of current postal reform bills that would unfairly balance postal service debt on the backs of its retirees by forcing them into Medicare Part B, the Task Force opted not to endorse this as a solution. Though the Task Force did not recommend the elimination of USPS’ onerous health care prefunding requirement, it did call for such liabilities to be restructured and payments re-amortized with a new actuarial calculation based only on the population of employees at or near retirement age. This is a common-sense proposal and a good first step toward alleviating USPS financial distress.

Among its many proposals, the Task Force recommended reducing pay by eliminating postal employees’ right to collective bargaining over compensation, and pursuing “reforms” to USPS compensation in keeping with those proposed for the overall federal workforce in the President’s Management Agenda, including compensation paid to workers injured and disabled on the job. Similarly, the Task Force called for altering the entire Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) to increase employee contributions and move toward a defined contribution system. NARFE stands stalwartly opposed to these typical federal compensation-cutting proposals and will work with our allies in Congress to ensure they are dead on arrival.

Oral Arguments Heard in *Dawson v. Steager*

The U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments on December 3 for the case of *Dawson v. Steager*, in which former U.S. Marshal James Dawson is challenging West Virginia’s discriminatory tax treatment of his federal annuity. In addition to attending oral arguments, NARFE weighed in by submitting an [amicus cu-](#)

[riae brief](#) to the court in support of the retired federal marshal and to defend all federal retirees from financial hardships induced through discrimination by state governments in the taxation of their retirement benefits. Please click [here](#) to read a statement from NARFE President Ken Thomas.

West Virginia fully exempts from state income tax all benefits earned by state law enforcement officers from four West Virginia retirement plans, but only exempts a portion of Dawson’s Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) annuity earned through similar work. The West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals upheld this unfair tax rule, determining that federal statutory and constitutional law only prohibit state government use of “blanket” exemptions for all state government retirees while denying such exemptions for similarly situated federal retirees. If the U.S. Supreme Court sides with the lower court’s erroneous decision, it would provide loopholes for West Virginia and other states to provide tax exemptions to subclasses of state government retirees without extending the same treatment to federal retirees whose annuities are based on comparable job types. If the court rules against Dawson, protections for the equal tax treatment of 2.6 million federal annuitants’ retirement income would be stripped away, and federal retirees in every state could be subject to harsher state tax burdens than their state government retiree counterparts.

States must not be permitted to undermine the doctrine of intergovernmental tax immunity as codified in federal statute 4 U.S.C. §111. The U.S. Supreme Court previously held, in *Davis v. Michigan Department of Treasury*, that under this statute, state tax schemes cannot impose a “heavier tax burden” on retired federal government employees than on retired state and local government employees unless there are “significant differences between the two classes.” NARFE expects the U.S. Supreme Court to issue a decision in *Dawson v. Steager* sometime next year, by

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the end of the session before the court’s 2019 summer recess beginning late June.

OIG Report Puts Reorganization Proposal under Further Scrutiny

In a recent report, “Assessment of GSA’s Management and Performance Challenges for Fiscal Year 2019,” the General Services Administration (GSA) Office of Inspector General (OIG) identified internal controls as an ongoing issue for the agency citing a large-scale trend of internal control weaknesses that led to violations of laws and regulations, misreporting of data and poor stewardship of public resources.

Considering this damaging new information regarding GSA senior leadership’s negligence in establishing firm internal controls, NARFE calls on the administration to reconsider its reorganization proposal to transfer the Office of Personnel Management’s (OPM) programmatic functions to GSA, including: retirement services, health care benefits and insurance programs, and human resources solutions. These programs deserve proper and careful management and any steps to move their services should be met with serious scrutiny by Congress. NARFE’s previous concerns that folding OPM’s functions into a larger organization could risk these vital programs not receiving sufficient attention and resources are only heightened. GSA is in no condition to take on new responsibilities, especially those as complicated and significant as federal employee and retiree programs. Please contact your representatives in Congress and implore them to provide proper oversight of the administration’s reorganization plans.

OPM Establishes New Locality Pay Areas Advocated by NARFE

NARFE is devoted to providing hard-working civil servants with much-deserved pay equity. Competitive compensation is necessary for the fair treatment of federal employees and to ensure we are able to continue recruiting and retaining the best and brightest into federal service. NARFE efforts to reduce

the pay disparity between federal and nonfederal workers across the country paid off. On December 7, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) published a final rule in the Federal Register to establish six new General Schedule (GS) locality pay areas: Birmingham, AL; Burlington, VT; Corpus Christi, TX; Omaha, NE; San Antonio, TX; and Virginia Beach/Norfolk, VA. OPM reported that roughly 70,000 GS employees will benefit from these additions.

Despite these improvements, no locality pay will be granted if President Trump freezes federal pay for calendar year 2019. Please urge Congress to override the president’s pay freeze by granting a federal pay raise through the appropriations process.

Federal Pay Freeze in Effect

On Friday, Dec. 28, President Trump issued an Executive Order freezing Federal employee pay for 2019, the first time a pay freeze has been imposed on federal workers since 2013. Members of the military services will receive a 2.6% pay increase. Democratic lawmakers have said they plan to overrule the decision and give federal workers a 1.9 % pay increase once they take control of the House, retroactive to the beginning 2019. The raise would need to be added to the legislation lawmakers pass to break the stalemate over spending that has resulted in a partial government shutdown.

UPCOMING WEBINAR: Federal and Military Service? Maximize Your Benefits

Are you a federal worker with military service? Then join federal benefits expert James Marshall for a webinar on Thursday, January 10 at 2 p.m. ET.

Feds with prior military service have a number of options to consider. This webinar will help you take full advantage of the military/federal benefits relationship. You will learn which types of military service are credible under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) or the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS), how to understand the differences between your leave and retirement Service Computation Dates (SCDs), the pros and cons of combining your military retirement with your future federal retirement, and more.

This NARFE Federal Benefits Institute webinar is Thursday, January 10, at 2 p.m. ET. Registration is required, and NARFE members register for free. Nonmember registration is \$39.95 and includes a one-year NARFE membership. NARFE membership includes access to the full webinar archive, which helps NARFE members take charge of their benefits and guarantee a secure future. Not yet a member? View the list of programs here and register today. Members register for FREE here.

Alzheimer's Corner Marilyn Markman, RN

Good bye 2018 Hello 2019

So, will this be "the year", the year of the cure for Alzheimer's? Probably not. But--- research will continue and that is good news. Aside from research for "the cure", there is other research going on for diagnosis and treatment.

The Washington Beacon (a free newspaper for seniors - can be found at senior centers, some gyms, pharmacies, county offices, etc) in the December 2018 issue on page 10 under Fitness and Health is the title "An eye scan may detect early Alzheimer's". At a recent annual meeting of the American Academy of Ophthalmology, results of two studies were presented showing a new non-invasive imaging device that can see signs of Alzheimer's in seconds. What! Can this be? Using this imaging, physicians can see the smallest veins in the back of the eye, including red blood cells moving through the retina. Researchers believe that because the retina is connected to the brain by way of the optic nerve," deterioration in the retina and its blood vessels may mirror the changes going on in blood vessels and structures in the brain, thereby offering a window into the disease process.

The article goes on to talk about other studies. The bottom line is, the earlier the diagnosis, the earlier the treatment and this is important because patients are at such high risk.

Hopefully soon this non-invasive imaging called optical coherence tomography angiography (OCTA) will be available to all of us. Keep informed about this through your optometrist/ophthalmologist.

Wishing all a Happy Healthy 2019

Previous Chapter Meeting, December 19th

Chapter 356 held its annual Christmas/Holiday party with 19 members and guests present, including Virginia Federation Area IX Vice President Jim Little. Two floral arrangements donated by the Flower Gallery of Manassas and other items donated by the Chapter officers and Committee chairs were auctioned to attendees and netted \$310 for the Alzheimer's Fund; several members also made donations directly to the Alzheimer's Fund, bringing the total amount collected to \$450. In addition, grocery gift cards were collected for SERVE.

A short business meeting was conducted with officer and committee reports. The Minutes of the November Chapter meeting, as they appeared in the Newsletter, were approved and the Treasurer's Report was accepted. President Joe

Powell and National Legislation Chair Bill Briscoe will attend NARFE's Legislative Training Conference, to be held March 10-13, 2019 in Alexandria. Members were encouraged to consider registering for the conference. Jim Little noted that the Virginia Federation will hold its annual conference April 7 - 10, 2019 at the Doubletree by Hilton in Charlottesville, VA and urged members to attend. Joe Powell mentioned that he had recently learned that under the new tax law federal employees' moving expenses are not deductible and any reimbursements received would become taxable (*see his column on p. 1 of this newsletter*).

The next regular monthly meeting of Chapter 356 will be held on Wednesday, January 16 at the Hibachi Buffet and Sushi Grill.

Mary M. Brandt
Secretary

Happy New Year
2019

MEDICARE REIMBURSEMENT ACCOUNT

Happy New Year. As 2018 closes, it is time to start looking forward to 2019. The Medicare Reimbursement Account program began by BC/BS in 2018 will continue into 2019. The program will reimburse you up to \$600 for your Medicare Part B premium per year via direct deposit to your bank account. To be eligible you must be a BC/BS Basic Option member enrolled in Medicare Part A and B.

You must register to participate in the program and if you participated last year you must reregister for 2019. For most of you it will be very easy to register online. For those who are not so computer savvy you have the option of doing it by fax or mail. You will need your 4-digit ID code which is a combination of your day of birth and the last two digits of your social security number. For example, if you were born on 6th of month and last two digits of your social security number are 34, your ID code would be 0634.

To register online go to <https://participant.wageworks.com> to register for new account or to open your existing account. To register by mail or fax go online to <https://www.fepblue.org/medicare-reimbursement-account> to download a claims form. This site will also give your fax and mailing information. If you have a problem obtaining your form please contact me or your Chapter Service Officer.

- You will need to provide five bits of information:
- Date of payment
 - Provider name (which is Medicare in this case)
 - Detailed description
 - Proof of payment
 - Name

A copy of your annual Social Security Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) statement will provide the needed information. If your payments were not withheld from your Social Security benefits you will need to provide proof that you paid. This can be in form of cancelled check, credit card statement or bank statement that matches your Medicare Part B premium. In most cases your begin date will be Jan 1 and end date will be Dec 31.

Arlene Arthur, VFN Co-Service Officer

Chapter 356 Membership Report for December 2018

- 1 new member
- 1 dropped for non-renewal
- 2 transferred out

Welcome to our Chapter
Jerome King

Chapter 356 membership as of December 31, 2018 is 177 members.

CHAPTER 356 OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES

President	Joseph Powell	703-369-5183
First Vice President	Helen Brooks	703-791-6737
Second Vice President	Priscilla Saboe	703-361-1150
Secretary	Mary Brandt	703-753-3954
Treasurer	Richard Horte	703-368-8767
Membership Comm.	Helen Brooks	703-791-6737
National Legislation	Bill Briscoe	703-403-8860
Program Comm.	Vacant	
Public Relations Comm.	Vacant	
Service Officer	Priscilla Saboe	703-361-1150
Sunshine Comm.	Priscilla Saboe	703-361-1150
Alzheimer's Comm.	Marilyn Markman, RN	703-791-4329
Chapter Chaplain	Vacant	
Newsletter Editor	Richard Horte	703-368-8767
Auditor	Joseph Powell	703-369-5183
Immediate Past President	Jack Shipley	703-753-0143

Email Address Changes

Be sure to notify NARFE or our chapter whenever you change your email address to assure you continue to receive this newsletter.

Manassas Chapter Newsletter Online

We are using the NARFE e-mail system to distribute our newsletter to members. If you are not receiving NARFE email, please contact us or NARFE Headquarters at Member Services (703-838-7760). The latest newsletter is also available at the Virginia Federation website at www.vanarfe.org. Go to Chapter/Area Newsletters #356.