

National Legislation – Fall 2008

Congress has adjourned, once more failing to act on a number of NARFE issues. A couple of measures got through the House – voting rights for the District of Columbia, sick leave credit for retiring FERS employees – but they didn't make it through the Senate. A measure which did make it through the Senate, switching active employees in Hawaii, Alaska, and non-continental U.S. territories from COLAs (not counted toward retirement) to locality pay increases (which do count), got nowhere in the House. And of course our major priorities, Premium Conversion and repealing the Government Pension Offset and Windfall Elimination Provision, went nowhere because of cost issues. Meanwhile the national economy has gone into the tank, and that's where Congress will focus for the long haul.

There is some talk of the current 110th Congress coming back for a rump session after the elections - November 17 is the rumored date. But if it does, the principal purpose would be to settle organizational issues before the 111th Congress kicks off in January, and possibly to deal with ongoing problems from the current financial collapse.

I hope everyone reads and takes to heart the report of Dan Adcock's remarks at the Louisville convention, regarding the "perfect storm" threatening federal retirement benefits (see p. 37 of the November issue of NARFE Magazine). The financial willies that presently afflict the country will cause Congress to look energetically for expenses to cut, and retirement benefits will no doubt offer a target. All the more so as we start drawing a 5.8 percent COLA just before the 111th Congress convenes in January.

As to NARFE-PAC, the news is not good. Numbers barely budged in the last quarter, with Virginia's contributions growing only by \$1,536 between June 30 and September 30. Many chapters had no increase in contributions, and those gifts that did come in were at minimal levels. Nationally NARFE-PAC's collections were still less than \$1 million at September 30, and numbers of contributions nation-wide numbers are only about two-thirds of their level at this time in the last Congressional cycle (i.e., October 2006), 41,000, compared to 60,000. Virginia remained second only to California in NARFE-PAC collections, at \$64,610 over 21 months, but reaching our goal of \$85,000 for the 2-year cycle seems unlikely. NARFE members: please contribute.

Meanwhile, during 2007/2008, NARFE-PAC has contributed to Virginia candidates as follows:

Thelma Drake (R-2nd)	9/24/07	\$1,000 primary election
Bobby Scott (D-3rd)	5/09/07	2,000 primary election
Virgil Goode (R-5 th)	10/22/08	2,000 general election
Bob Goodlatte (R-6th)	7/30/08	1,000 general election
Jim Moran (D-8th)	6/15/07; 7/30/08	5,000 primary; 5,000 general
Frank Wolf (R-10th)	12/04/07; 7/30/08	5,000 primary; 5,000 general
Tom Davis (R-11th)	2/26/07	5,000 primary election
Mark Warner (D-Senate)	10/22/08	2,000 general election
Total		\$33,000

Charles Delaplane, National Legislation Chair - October 25, 2008