

## STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE INITIAL REPORT FOR REGION II LEADERS

### BACKGROUND

In 2013, the National Executive Board (NEB), recognizing the need for change in our organization, authorized then National President Joe Beaudoin to appoint the Future of NARFE Committee (FONC) to develop a vision for the future. At the 2014 National Convention our members considered the FONC Report and Recommendations and authorized the NEB to proceed with strategic planning using that Report as a foundation for necessary change. The members specifically directed the NEB to establish a formal planning process no later than February 2015. President Dick Thissen announced the new Strategic Planning Process on February 13, 2015 and subsequently appointed a Strategic Planning Team and a Strategic Planning Committee. The intent of these actions is not simply to address short-term needs but to inculcate long-term planning into the organizational culture of NARFE.

The Strategic Planning Team (SPT) is a standing committee with four members chaired by Secretary/Treasurer Jon Dowie. The SPT will oversee the planning process going forward. The Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) is an ad hoc committee of ten members with different skill sets from around the country. The SPT will set planning priorities and provide information and guidance to the broader SPC. The role of the SPC is to analyze all pertinent information and provide advice to the SPT and the NEB on what and how and when to make needed evolutionary changes to ensure NARFE's long-term ability to carry out its mission on behalf of our members. The end goal is to produce workable proposals that will bring about the necessary change and that will be supported by a solid majority of our members.

The above is brief background information to set the stage, especially for those new to the process. There is much more information available from the sources listed below. On the NARFE website under **HQ Happenings** is a blue banner labeled **Strategic Planning**. Here you'll find links to these documents:

1. A short article on the topic that appears in the *Insider* for April 2015
2. The *Strategic Plan Fact Sheet – Team and Committee Assignments*
3. The *Strategic Plan Diagram* (timeline, process, participating groups, communication tools)
4. A special FON edition of the *Insider*

Please note that this site will be updated whenever there is something significant to be added. Also, the Spring 2015 Maryland Federation Newsletter contains an excellent article on the planning process by Region II Regional Vice-President Evelyn Kirby. It is available at [www.MDNARFE.org](http://www.MDNARFE.org).

### WHAT ARE WE DOING NOW

The SPC was appointed in late March and met for the first time at Headquarters on April 6&7. We spent a little time getting acquainted and being briefed on the process and our role. We had some general discussion about the challenges NARFE faces. We have no illusions about the task ahead. This process will be complicated and difficult, but we believe we can be successful or we would not have signed on. We agreed that we have an obligation to future generations. NARFE has served long-time members very well, but it needs to change if it is to be around to serve the people coming along behind us. We can't just hope things will work out if we don't act. They won't. We know for certain that a majority of our members need to understand the need for change and support it or nothing will happen. Communications and trust will be critical going forward. We can safely predict that the Strategic Planning Team and the Strategic Planning Committee will not do everything perfectly or to every member's satisfaction. We do pledge:

- To be honest, open and transparent with all stakeholders throughout the process.
- To listen to everyone, and think carefully about what changes can and should be made.
- To do our best to include and represent both the active and vocal groups *and* the silent majority – the 85%-90% of our members that don't attend meetings – as well as new members – even those without a computer or email address.

Our tasks as a committee include providing our best advice on the right things to do and also when and how to do them. We will collectively have to balance the need for urgent action with the risks of moving at a pace faster than our members will support. If NARFE moves too slowly or too quickly, the result will be failure. The brutal truth is that about one third of our current members will not be with us in 5 or 6 years, based simply on our average age and the IRS life expectancy tables. That argues for urgency. The other truth, based on HQ surveys, is that some of our current members and many of our potential members do not perceive any real threat to their benefits and are therefore not very concerned about the effectiveness of NARFE going forward. Ultimately the NEB will have to make the hard decisions, but we want to provide the best advice we can. In that regard, we will need all the help we can get from our members and in particular from our chapter and federation leaders.

At this stage I realize it is hard to provide useful comments or suggestions since everything is general and high level. That will change over the next weeks and months. If we all stay on schedule, there will be a progress briefing at the Federation Presidents meeting in July. The next big target date will be the release of the proposed Strategic Plan and related Bylaw changes in February, 2016. There will be continuing back and forth and exchange of ideas and suggestions between the members and the two committees and the NEB leading up to that milestone. (Both the NEB and the SPC are very conscious of the fact that our members and leaders did not feel they had enough time to fully absorb and assess the FON Report before the 2014 Convention and will work to avoid a similar problem this time).

The SPT, with NEB approval, did narrow the list of issues to be addressed by the SPC. Here is that list for your information. We spent most of our two days talking about these issues and making sure we had a common understanding of them before we begin to work towards any conclusions. I think we achieved that, which was a critical first step because our members all come to the table with different levels of

NARFE experience and knowledge. That was by design to ensure that any advice we provide comes from a broad range of viewpoints. Here is the topic list:

Board of Directors

Board of Directors as Policy Makers

Board of Directors set annual dues

Assess Federation/State Advocacy Structure

Study Federation Funds

Establish Congressional District Leaders

Optional Local Chapter Membership

NARFE Membership as Congressional District Action Team

Electronic meetings (We deferred consideration of this issue and quorum requirements, considering them tactical, not strategic, questions).

Quorum requirements

One member one vote

Unified Association Dues

Note that we were invited to add other issues. We had some discussion but did not reach any conclusions on adding more issues. Note also that this list does not include all the FON recommendations. Some were deferred by the SPT for consideration in later years.

The Committee did agree on this set of broad strategic goals to guide our deliberations.

#### ENSURE/SECURE THE FUTURE OF NARFE

- a. TRANSFORM GOVERNANCE TO BE MORE EFFICIENT, EFFECTIVE, AGILE, CONSISTENT AND ACCOUNTABLE;
- b. ESTABLISH A CONSISTENT BRAND TO INCREASE AWARENESS, ELIMINATE CONFUSION AND CONVEY THE VALUE OF NARFE;
- c. STABILIZE AND GROW MEMBERSHIP TO SUPPORT EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY AND TO DELIVER FINANCIAL STABILITY

#### WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

The SPT and the SPC continue our research and discussion via electronic meetings and email exchanges. We seek input from our members and leaders as we work towards conclusions. Based on SPC advice and other inputs, the four-member SPT will start drafting a proposed Strategic plan in September. The NEB

will review and perhaps amend or augment the plan before a complete version is released to our members in February, 2016. Implementing bylaw changes will be considered by our members at the 2016 National Convention, unless some are deemed so urgent by the NEB that they should be submitted earlier for Referendum

#### WHAT SHOULD YOU DO

Pay attention, stay informed, ask questions, and provide your best thinking. Input on any topic will be considered, but will be more useful if related to the issues on the table. All comments are welcome and encouraged. Comments sent to [stratplan@narfe.org](mailto:stratplan@narfe.org) will reach all the right people. It would help if copies of comments to this site were shared with me and RVP Evelyn Kirby as well. However, if you prefer to contact me or Evelyn Kirby directly instead of using stratplan@narfe.org, that is fine too. Should members without email choose to comment, they may send a letter addressed to Strategic Planning at NARFE headquarters, 606 N Washington Street, Alexandria VA 22314.

Thank you for your interest in this process and for your service to NARFE. We are in this together.

Respectfully, Ted Jensen, Member Strategic Planning Committee