



*National Active and Retired Federal Employees*

# Newsletter



April 2019

Vol. 36, No. 8

The Aspen Hill Chapter of NARFE publishes this Newsletter monthly, except July and August.

**NOTE:** Unless otherwise noted\*, our Members Meetings are held on the **4<sup>th</sup> Tuesdays at 12:50 P.M.** at the Wheaton, MD 20906, 240-777-4999; Ample free parking; Covered parking in rear. A pot-luck lunch starting at 12:30 precedes the meeting.

#### **UPCOMING MEETINGS/ACTIVITIES** (Open to all)

##### **Chapter:**

- Members Meetings: Apr 23 @ Stained Glass Pub; May meeting canceled; Jun 4 @ T.G.I.Fridays
- Newsletter input deadlines: Apr 18; May 23
- Board Meetings/Newsletter Prep: May 1; Jun 5

##### **Outside Events:**

- Mid-County Citizens Advisory Board Mtg., Tues. April 16 @ 7 pm, Mid-County Rec. Ctr., 2004 Queensguard Rd. Silver Spring.

## Score one for us!!

In February, the Supreme Court supported a Federal retiree's claim that the State of West Virginia illegally discriminated against him by not giving him the same tax breaks on his Federal pension that it gave State employees and retirees. Hooray! Many states have not given Federal employees the same benefits they give their own State employees and retirees. This ruling may be the catalyst for fairer tax treatment of Federal employees and retirees in the future.

## Hug a Tree!

Celebrate April's Earth Month in Montgomery County Parks—nature walks, camp fires, cleanups, and festivals! See

<https://www.montgomeryparks.org/earth-month/> for more information.

## President's Message

Every lunchtime during cherry blossom season, my co-worker, Barb, and I walked under the Kenwood cherry trees to enter a magical world--blossoms quietly filtering the air like snow, touching our faces like gentle kisses. The fragrance was heady and we hated to return to work. That was 40 years ago and though Barb passed away, I still think of her when the cherry trees bloom. The friendships people make at work are bonded by shared experiences. No one understands what we, as Federal workers, go/went through, and we share the fight to save our pensions and benefits. NARFE leads in that fight, and NARFE chapter meetings are where we get together for strength, knowledge, and friendship.

Our March meeting was fun and informative—a full house, too! Dr. Danielle Tate tested our balance level and explained about the myriad threats to our balance; we learned about the new changes to TSP, and celebrated February and March birthdays—all with a lot of laughter, good food and chocolate cake.



(Sarah Richards and Dr. Danielle Tate at March Meeting)

Action items for this month: (1) join us for our pizza party on April 23; (2) contact Paul Schwartz at [pkYanks@aol.com](mailto:pkYanks@aol.com) and let him know how the tax changes affected you (see his article on page 2); (3) celebrate Earth Month; and (4) walk among the cherry blossoms. It will do your heart good! - SR

## Itemized Deductions on Maryland Income Taxes

Have you done your Maryland income taxes yet? Were you shocked by an increase in your state and local taxes because you took the federal standard deduction and could not claim itemized deductions on the Maryland tax form? You are not alone. Most people using the standard federal deduction are experiencing a \$1,000 to \$2,000 increase in their Maryland income tax!

Two bills to fix this problem were introduced and cross-filed in this session of the General Assembly. The first, from Del. Wivell, HB 327, has been forwarded to the Revenue Subcommittee of the House Ways and Means Committee. The cross-filed bipartisan bill from Senators Serafini and Feldman, SB 906, has been forwarded to the Rules Committee. While the 90-day session will end soon there's still time to email your state Senator and Delegates to demand that they support these bills!

The federal Tax Cut and Jobs Act (TCJA) was passed late in 2017 and hardly anyone realized that there would be a bad impact on many Maryland taxpayers. **Fast forward to this year, many MD taxpayers are only now learning that they will be paying more state and local taxes.** The Department of Legislative Services' analysis projects these bills will result in a \$155.5 million loss of revenues in FY 2020. **However, their analysis fails to account for the 2019 windfall increase in revenue caused by the legislature's failure to resolve this problem last year.**

As you are aware, there have been articles on the issue in *NARFE Buzz* all year with advice on what you can do; namely contact your legislators and let them know it concerns you. During this past election year, the State Legislation Committee (SLC) of the Maryland Federation sent a survey with the itemized deduction issue as the top issue to ALL candidates for the General Assembly. SLC members spoke directly with many members of the General Assembly and were successful in getting bipartisan sponsorship of the Senate bill.

Federation President Gary Roundtree sent email messages to all NARFE members with information they could use. You probably received one (or more) of them if you have given NARFE HQ your email address.

That brings us to the year ahead. Except for the survey, all these efforts will have to continue, along with outreach to other organizations to raise

awareness about the need to contact legislators to deal with the itemized deduction issue on MD taxes. You can help by doing the same. You can also help by letting Paul Schwartz, Chair of the SLC, know about your personal experience with increased MD income tax. Email him at [pksyanks@aol.com](mailto:pksyanks@aol.com).

By Dick Strombotne with contributions by Paul Schwartz & Bob Kammer

## Chapter 1892 Leadership

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### Critical Action Needed Urgently

MD State Senate Bill 906, the fix to the tax problem, was forwarded to the Rules Committee. It's companion, State House Bill 327, was forwarded to the Revenue Subcommittee of House Ways and Means. The State Legislature closes April 8. **Only days left to contact your senators and delegates** to urge them to pass these bills. **Do it today!** You can identify your representatives and contact information on the NARFE website at <https://www.narfe.org/legislation/index.cfm?fa=voterVoice>

## In Sympathy

We only recently received notifications of the following members' deaths.

**David Boyce**, 71, NARFE member, passed away on September 9, 2018. He served in the Navy for 2 years and the reserves for 5, then worked for Inspector Generals as an internal auditor at Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Postal Service for 20 years. He retired to Rehoboth Beach, DE in 2010 where he enjoyed volunteering at the Rehoboth Beach Film Society, Community Resource Center, the Tunnell Cancer Center, and the Rehoboth Art League. He is survived by his wife of 48 years, Elinor Boyce, a son, daughter, and grandchildren.

**Louise Therese Zabel**, 95, who worked for the Federal Government for over 20 years passed away on October 26, 2017. She was preceded in death by her husband of nearly 60 years, Edwin Zabel, in 2008. She was active in the Catholic Church and the mother of four and grandmother of eight.

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### Then and Now

Federal employees used rotary-dial, hard-wired telephones in 1970. Typewriter keys got stuck together and files were paper with filing cabinets taking up a whole room for one small office of two people. The world has changed, but the employees are still mission driven and hard working. Federal employees are self-sacrificing and have had a difficult time of it this year. June 4<sup>th</sup>, we celebrate civil servants and say thank you at our Chester Alan Arthur Day luncheon.

We'll give awards to a currently working Federal employee and a NARFE chapter member and hope to hear from a current employee and a long retired one who both did the same job. Chapter members and non-members are invited to take a break and celebrate how wonderful Federal employees are.

Luncheon will be at the T.G.I.Fridays (12147 Rockville Pike, just South of Twinbrook Parkway) at noon, June 4. We'll each order from the menu, so no need to send money in advance, but we will need to know how many are attending so the chef and staff will be prepared. Please call by 301-847-9820 or email [BobKammer@Comcast.net](mailto:BobKammer@Comcast.net) by May 28, and tell us how many will be in your party.

## By Huge Popular Request!!

Celebrate Spring and being alive--join us for good food, each other's company, a silent auction, and book sale. Take advantage of half-price pizza day at the Stained Glass Pub (12510 Layhill Rd., Silver Spring, MD) on Tuesday, April 23, at noon for our Pizza Party!

Don't eat pizza? No problem, everyone's ordering off the extensive menu. No payments need to be sent in advance; you'll pay at the restaurant only for what you ordered. However, we need to tell the restaurant how many are attending so the chef will be prepared. Please call 301-924-4633 or email [cthy\\_hobbs@yahoo.com](mailto:cthy_hobbs@yahoo.com) by April 15, and let us know if you plan to attend. Spouses and friends welcome as well. Note that this celebration takes the place of our regular April meeting. Book donations may be made at the restaurant during the Pizza Party.

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## Chapter Fundraiser – Silent Auction

Donations of new and gently used items are needed for a silent auction at the April 23 pizza luncheon at the Stained Glass Pub in Glenmont. Items received so far include a wine bottle opener, Yankee candle, stress-free coloring kit, Starbuck ceramic coffee mug, note pads, bill box/case, purse rack organizer, and Thanksgiving finger-tip towels. Please, contact me (301-924-4633 or email [cthy\\_hobbs@yahoo.com](mailto:cthy_hobbs@yahoo.com)) to schedule delivery and/or answer questions about this chapter fundraiser. Thank you. - Cathy Hobbs

## Vote for Officers of the NARFE MD Federation

It's time to vote for officers for the NARFE Maryland Federation. The candidates' descriptions are in your Spring 2019 MD Federation newsletter. The ballot was sent electronically to you. Ballots must be postmarked by April 15 to be valid. No electronic ballots will be accepted. If you do not have email, you will need to request a ballot by sending a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Maria Ray, Ballot Coordinator, PO. Box 47097, Windsor Mill, MD 21244. Note for newer members: The Maryland Federation is the next unit above the Chapter in the NARFE hierarchy. The Federation supports the Chapters.

## County Purse Strings Revealed

The County Executive released his recommended budget for Fiscal Year 2019-2020. It's available at: <https://apps.montgomerycountymd.gov/BASISOPE/RA.../Index.aspx>. If you have any concerns or questions about it that you would like to share, the County Council will be hosting Public Hearings. This link has information on how to sign up for the hearings and instructions on how to testify: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/.../F.../agenda/FuturePHs.pdf>

## FREE Income Tax Assistance

The Montgomery County website lists multiple programs for free income tax preparation assistance at <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/Cashback/schedule.html>. The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program in coordination with Montgomery County is one free assistance program for folks making \$54,000 a year or less and you can find sites by visiting [www.irs.gov/VITA](http://www.irs.gov/VITA). Other organizations listed offering tax assistance are: Community Tax Aid, Montgomery County Public Libraries, and Montgomery County AARP (240-777-2577 for appointment).

## Thank You, Thank You

Our pot-luck lunches at the monthly membership meetings have been SO successful thanks to all those who brought food and those who paid their \$4! We sincerely appreciate your support and hope you enjoyed the bountiful and delicious food.

## March General Meeting Pictures

