



MARYLAND FEDERATION NEWSLETTER FALL 2011



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Ted Jensen

Federal employees and retirees and their families face unprecedented challenges in today's swirling political and economic storms. Are we doing the right things to keep NARFE strong and flexible enough to respond effectively for the long term? I don't know, but we're certainly trying and working hard. My focus will be on what the Maryland Federation and our National office have been doing to maintain and build our organization.

One critical thing we needed to do was to get our members here in Maryland informed about the external threats and motivated to respond. I think our State Convention in May accomplished that. We had moved the Convention to Bowie to see if we could increase attendance and save some money for other purposes, such as recruiting. Both those goals were achieved. We took care of our business in two days, with 215 people attending. That was about 40 more people and \$10,000 less compared to our 2009 convention. We enjoyed and learned from several outstanding guest speakers, including Paul Carew, NARFE National Vice President; John Gage, National President of the American Federation of Government Employees; Ian Kramer, Advocacy & Outreach Director, Alzheimers Association; Rebecca Miller, Outreach Coordinator, Telecommunications Access of MD/Relay; Julie Tagen, NARFE Assistant Legislative Director; and Bill Wasserman, President, M & R Strategic Services. The current Federation officers were re-elected, which I personally appreciate because we work very well together. We established a Site Selection Committee, chaired by Jackie Roberson, to recommend sites for our 2013, and 2015, conventions. The written Convention Evaluations we received will guide that team's work. I can't say THANK YOU enough to those who planned and executed this event. John Padan and Evelyn Kirby and

Dorothy Campbell and a long list of others did a fantastic job. Dorothy Campbell was so inspired that she agreed to take on the long-vacant job of Public Relations Chair for the Federation.

While I'm saying thanks, let me add a special note about our Federation Treasurer and active Past President and now Retention Chair, Dick Strombotne. In an organization with many talented, hard working members, Dick stands out for his ideas and analytical skills and the sheer number of hours he devotes to NARFE. Read the report in this issue on the results of his work to improve our retention rates. Dick's efforts supplement the good work of the National office and the chapters and are producing solid, measurable results.

We need to keep our current members and recruit a lot of new ones. Given the daily doses of bad news for Federal employees in the media, one would expect to see new members breaking down our doors to sign up, but that's not happening yet. In Maryland some individuals and chapters are stepping up their recruiting efforts. Bernie Goldsborough, Chapter #969, was recently recognized for signing up many new members, and a few others get credit for smaller but very welcome recruiting successes. We could do much better.

The Federation itself is trying to do more. Starting in May and into August, the Federation, with help from the National office, has been running pop up ads on www.WBAL.com. WBAL reaches most of Maryland and parts of Delaware and Pennsylvania. The ads are professionally designed to grab the attention of Federal employees. One specifically echoes the Protect America's Heartbeat campaign and urges viewers to send a message to Congress. Those who send a message are later sent follow up recruiting packages by

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126	Western Charles/Indian Head	Ed Rice
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258	Bethesda/Chevy Chase	Gordon Brown
264	Hyattsville	Thomas LoJacono
306	Hagerstown	Ed Wurmb
357	Takoma Park	Barbara Iba
409	Frederick	Mary Lou Blessing
410	West-Mar	Donnie Gibson
422	Laurel	Patricia Farmer
581	Gaithersburg	John Padan
969	St. Mary's County	Pat Myers
1122	Northern P.G. County	Bob Doyle
1127	Rockville	Jennifer Ramsey
1143	Leisure World	Barbara Walter
1260	Southern P.G. County	Carl Ruble
1261	Delmarva	Elenor Kaul
1363	Bay Area	JoAnne Groves
1372	Tidewater	Evelyn Kirby
1466	Calvert County	Barry Grier
1519	Glen Burnie	Stan Jacobs
1522	Susquehanna	Harold Forst
1734	Howard County	Burdelle Dowdell
1747	Greater Bowie/Crofton	Dorothy Campbell
1770	Bel Air	Reed Magness
1887	Wheaton/Glenmont	Ruth Foss
1888	White Oak	Marcia Swanson
1892	Aspen Hill	Saj Durrani
1936	N.W. Baltimore Metro	Barbara Cuffie
1972	Waldorf/La Plata	Richard Campbell
1990	Catonsville	Lou Brocato
2166	Eastern Baltimore Area	John Carduner
2262	Upper Marlboro	Bob Jacobs
2274	Ocean Area	Dan McGrath
2306	Carroll County	Don Champ

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the National Office. The other ad notes the threat to our benefits and urges viewers to contact NARFE via the National website or the Membership 800 number to join. The ads pop up about 250,000 times a month. Our "click" rates are good. We are working to evaluate the effectiveness of this campaign, which is a fairly complicated business. We may also explore some radio spots. We know these techniques work for other organizations and we think they'll work for us. We also know that it typically takes 7 contacts to get someone's attention, so this needs to be a long-term effort. Each time an individual sees or hears a message about NARFE counts, so we all need to persist.

Our National office has been very active also. The Federation presidents and the National Executive Board met for a productive 3-day session in Reno in July. We covered a lot of ground and I picked up some good ideas and a lot of useful information. The highlights included an excellent briefing from Legislative Director Dan Adcock that put dollars and cents on some of the proposed changes to our benefits. Dan predicted a move towards "no hands budgeting" by Congress, and sure enough we now have a "Super Commission" charged with making the hard policy and fiscal choices that no one wants to vote on. It's easier for elected officials to make unpopular cuts "automatic." He noted that Federal spending is currently about 24% of the Gross Domestic Product and we already know about our long-term debt situation. Our goal as Federal employees and retirees is to do our fair share to help resolve these budget problems in the best interests of our beloved country, but to avoid being singled out while others make no contribution. Dan urged local members to "hand carry" NARFE's message to Congressional staff people and build relationships with them (see report on page 14).

In the "good news" column, the National Information Technology Advisory Committee (NIAC) shared its recommendations with us. They were very well received. I have already shared their report with the chapters and won't get into detail here. I will say that this group did a great job and when the NEB begins to implement some of the recommendations this Fall chapters will see marked improvements in the critical membership reports coming from headquarters. Other improvements will follow as funding permits. Maryland's own Pat Dempsey was a major contributor to the NIAC report and we very much appreciate his work.

The NEB announced the extension of the contract with M&R Strategic Services to continue the Protect America's Heartbeat campaign. The participating "target states," including Maryland, think there is value added by the campaign's approaches and supported the extension at a somewhat reduced level of effort.

In a very productive discussion on recruiting and retention, the NEB indicated that it is considering establishing a full-time position to focus on building relationships with Federal agencies to allow our members access to recruit. I'll be sharing more information and ideas about recruiting and retention later.

We were also briefed on the evolving National eNARFE Chapter..

In short, this is another membership option for those who, for whatever reason, do not want to join a traditional chapter. The NEB has concluded that the best approach is for Headquarters to maintain a single eChapter that anyone in the country can join. Successful operation may require the equivalent of a full-time staffer, which argues against Federations or chapters setting up their own versions. Federations will be able to make state-specific information available to eNARFE members and Federation presidents will be able to vote the proxies of eNARFE members who reside in their states. The Federations will get back 10% (\$4) of the dues for these new members as they do with traditional current members. So far eNARFE has about 1100 members, of which all but about 50 are new to NARFE. New members from the most recent OPM mailings chose traditional chapter membership over eNARFE membership by about 11-1, but that could change. We need to adjust and adapt to this new concept and help make it work.

I'll close with an update on the rewrite of the National By Laws. After some strong reactions to the first draft which was shared with Federation presidents just before the meeting in Reno, the By Laws Rewrite Committee presented a much modified and improved version. The general consensus was that this version was going in the right direction and did not contain any really controversial policy changes. A later version will be shared with all the chapters toward the end of this year.

TRAINING OPPORTUNITY by Ted Jensen

ATTENTION CHAPTER PRESIDENTS, MEMBERSHIP CHAIRS, LEGISLATIVE CHAIRS, NEWSLETTER EDITORS, FLC & SLC MEMBERS and guests: TRAINING DAY, NOVEMBER 1, BOWIE COMFORT INN. That's the "who, what, when and where." WHY? Because NARFE faces unprecedented challenges in building our membership and influencing public opinion. HOW? An integrated, interactive all-day session focused on the strategies and technologies needed to be effective communicators, advocates and leaders in any NARFE role.

If this sounds different, it is. We're trying a new approach. Instead of training a few people in specialized areas of responsibility, such as Membership or Legislation, we're inviting the key leaders from each chapter, plus the members of the FLC and the SLC, to focus on the skills and new tools that are necessary for success in any area. The themes will be Advocacy, Communications and Chapter Leadership. These were chosen based on suggestions received on the evaluation sheets after the May Convention. Some of the topics we'll work on will include social media strategies (think Facebook, Twitter, blogs), marketing and public relations techniques, using redesigned membership reports (think NARFE Information Technology Advisory Committee recommendations), effective newsletters, reaching and educating legislators, recruiting and mentoring new leaders, the Protect America's Heartbeat campaign, reaching out to current employees, and how the new eNARFE chapter works and impacts our organization. We also plan to bring in experts from other organizations to add to our in-house talents, people who

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have different experience and knowledge and are effective. We may bring in someone from one of the veterans organizations or a congressional office or the AARP, just as possible examples. This is new to us but we think but it will be interesting and will work.

Again, we are at a critical point. The Federation is ready to make

a major investment in training. The Federation will cover registration for up to 4 people from each chapter, plus members of the FLC and the SLC. We would really like to see more people from the chapters beyond the four and the FLC and SLC members. We strongly encourage chapters with sufficient funds to cover the \$20 registration for other individuals who want to participate. There will be more information in the Call Letter.

LEGISLATION



A Call for We the People and We Feds

*Evelyn Kirby, 1st Vice-Pres/
Legislative Director*

America is a nation with fairly high standards as 'norms', helpful deeds and services commonplace, dedicated public servants at multiple levels and any number of success stories of Good Government making the right difference in people's lives—on our soil and on others' soils. This good governance took centuries to create and sustain. Then again, many feel America has lost respect—at home and abroad—because of sad political conduct over the past months and weeks and decisions made or not made over a longer time on big issues like wars, social programs, taxes and a host of other topics. It is said we have lost face and drive [financial and otherwise]. However, we are not doomed—as Charlie Brown might say, though we've taken sharp hits. We are 'We the People'! And We the People didn't get to be We the People without pulling TOGETHER in tough times— with reason, civility, balance and urgency—for the long haul, for united good, after all the debate and healthy airing of disagreements. As a nation of irrevocably blended, merged, and intertwined values, beliefs, traditions, ethnicities, religions, and politics, plus varying ranges of age, income, regional spin and so on, We the People have to work hard to keep open minds on what's fair. We have to work hard to keep 'We the People' at the heart of decisions and actions. We the People, and those who represent us, cannot waste time on issues that divide. We ceased all coming from the same mold years ago. It's our responsibility to tell elected officials to keep We the People [all the people, whether they like them or not, or agree with them or not] at the top of their lists—not other interests that may garner bigger, hotter news bites. We the People deserve fair treatment, honest, fact-centered government, and accountability from those representing us...all of us, ...all the time.

And We Feds deserve our sacrifices to be recognized and matched by others. We Feds came through early stages of the recent deficit debacle nearly whole, but are still in the cross-hairs. Here are what you as leaders must do to keep NARFE fighting the good fight for We the People...and for We Feds:

--Spread the word yourself and via other leaders in your chapters about the importance of attending and speaking out in town hall sessions, summer picnics and other meetings with your U.S. Senators and U.S. Representatives. Most in our congressional delegation are staunch allies. To them we must give thanks and urge them to stay in our corner. For those who vote against issues NARFE favors we should have frank dialog about the points they are missing, about the high value of public service, about fair play, promises made and inclusion. Be sure to coordinate those contacts with other chapters in your area and members of the Federal Legislation Committee. Provide brief post-meeting reports to Jim Cowie.

--Continually relay to your Heartbeat Campaign Captains the latest information available and urge participation in Heartbeat initiatives by your chapter members. Fostering this effort is essential.

--Support calls for action by NARFE HQs, such as the July 27 call-in to Capitol Hill and the White House. Be patient and aggressive in stepping up to be heard and encourage your members to step up too.

--Request in your newsletters and meetings that your members update their personal contact information in NARFE records, e.g. postal address, phone number and email address. Urge all with email addresses to sign up for GEMS and share their email addresses with your chapter leaders too.

--Respond quickly to inquiries about the viability of issuing PAC donations or availability to attend PAC fund raisers. Your speedy replies and candor about PAC scenarios, and presence at events, are critical.

--At the state level, actively engage MD Delegates, Senators and others in talks about the value seniors, and those in public service, return to their neighborhoods by volunteering to help with civic and community work, especially in their retirement days.

--Join me in giving special thanks to those (1) who share the word about NARFE legislative matters and events, (2) who plan and attend scheduled meetings, (3) who nab legislators on the fly when opportunities present themselves to get their attention and support or thank them for the same, and (4) who make calls, write letters or send emails advocating our issues. Remember, when We Feds act together our voice is loud, our message strong....and We the People live on.



Default Avoided, But We Can Still Be Hit

Jim Cowie, Federal Legislative-Committee Coordinator

Our Federal Legislative Committee district coordinators will have organized approaches to our Senators and Representatives during the August recess. We hope they were successful. And, we hope that Chapter Presidents cooperated in making these arrangements in congressional districts where we do not yet have appointed FLC coordinators. Telling the truth about the value of our Federal service in these meetings is critical.

We had been waiting to see what kind of deal emerged to avoid default on the debt. Senator Ben Cardin briefed about 200 attendees at an AFGE-hosted meeting at Census Bureau Headquarters in Suitland on Friday 5 August on the elements in the agreement that has been passed into law. Nine NARFE Federation officers and Federation committee representatives were in attendance in reply to a late breaking announcement about the event circulated to all NARFE MD chapters and Federation committee heads. Senator Cardin (pictured below) was warmly received, candid in his comments and willing to respond with the information he had to the many questions asked. He reiterated his deep support of those in Government service and his intent to continue to fight for protection of their fair, earned compensation and benefits.



[L to R] Ted Jensen (409), Gary Roundtree (1936), Evelyn Kirby (1372), SENATOR CARDIN, Ron Bowers (Region II VP and 2166), and Jim Cowie (581). Other NARFE attendees at the event not pictured included: Barry Grier (1466), Dorothy Campbell (1747), Joe Young (1747) and Frank Chase (1734).

As generally reported in the media, the Senator indicated the deal will be implemented in two stages. A trillion dollars of savings over 10 years will be divided up between a number of the appropriations committees in the House and Senate, who will be responsible for allocating the cuts within their areas of jurisdiction and reconciling their proposals between the two congressional bodies. At a second stage, a super committee of 6 select-

ed members from each party will be asked to agree on a further \$1.2 trillion of savings over ten years, and if they cannot agree, then a further 50% will come from the defense budget and 50% from non-defense spending. These cuts would apply to FYs 2013-2021 and to both discretionary and mandatory spending programs, with some important exemptions, e.g. Social Security, Medicaid, veterans' benefits and pensions, payments to federal retirement funds, and child nutrition programs and Supplemental Security Income, among others. Medicare savings would be capped at 2% and be limited to providers only—no benefits would be cut or costs increased to seniors.

The best news from the deal is that the new law also does not make any reductions in the retirement, pay or health benefits of federal employees and annuitants. However, we are neither protected from cuts due to spending caps in agency budgets in the first stage, nor from the decisions made by the members of the super committee in the second stage should they reach an agreement. Since it is expected that each party is most likely to nominate "reliable" members whose careers could be in trouble if they supported compromises which offended the party principles, it is difficult to see how any kind of "balanced" sets of proposals may be the outcome. Hence, the fall back conditions would seem likely to come into play. It has already been announced that the Defense and Medical Supply lobbies are prepared to spend \$70 million and \$50 million respectively to defend their interests and it is difficult to see how this will not distort the final decisions that are taken, particularly when these lobbies will likely be stressing the job consequences from cuts in their sectors.

The best defense that we can muster is to stress how much of the pain has already been heaped on the Government sector when it was not our fault that the deficit is as high as it is. Further cuts in the Federal sector will threaten the quality of Federal service that the public expects and make it more difficult to recruit quality candidates. The emphasis in the next phase of Government policy should be to focus on steps that will promote job creation, many possibilities of which have been identified but are held back by a resistance to spending which can make an essential difference to the rate of economic recovery. In addition, we should be arguing for a balanced approach to addressing the deficit. Active support for addressing job creation and sharing the pain of recovery across all sectors of society will help influence the middle of the road independent voters who are likely to decide the next election. Our ability to defend the merits of our arguments will be substantially further eroded if the uncommitted voters decide against us.

NARFE-PAC: Protect Your Interests

by Jim Cowie

Many of us have to choose between supporting favorite charities including saving the world, but we are now in circumstances where we need to consider the best ways to save **our world**. The best reason for supporting NARFE-PAC is less that it gives donations to our most supportive Representatives, but more that NARFE selects constituencies that are very competitive and gives support to the candidate who supports our positions especially if opposed by someone who is very much against us. Who controls the House, Senate and White House has a major effect on how well we can defend our interests and every seat counts especially if the elections are close. Hence you can find NARFE –PAC donation documentation in most of the NARFE Magazines and you are warmly encouraged to protect your interests by making a contribution.



Legislation – Retirees Are Valuable

Ed Bice

State Legislative Committee Chair

The State Legislative Committee (SLC) met during the summer. Besides the usual MDPAC business, the main emphasis was on how to utilize a North Carolina study of 2008 that was updated in 2011 for our purposes. One of our purposes is the development of more friendly state tax policies for seniors and retirees.

The study was first brought to our attention in 2010 by member Dick Strombotne. Since then our members have shared the study and its results with legislators, NARFE members, and allied organizations. In conjunction with military groups, we used this study in support of HB 744, sponsored by Delegate Love (D-Dist. 32), during the 2011 Legislative session.

We are focused on how to get a study similar to the North Carolina effort initiated and completed in Maryland. The North Carolina study documents that retirees are a terrific economic and fiscal stimulus to the state. For instance for every \$1.00 in tax breaks for retirees, the state receives \$2.50 in return.

The SLC fully expects to develop legislative objectives for the 2012 session. When this is completed, the SLC legislative pamphlet will be printed and distributed.

The state's fiscal situation is less than ideal as a shortfall of approximately one billion dollars is projected for July 1, 2012. The question remains whether any revenue enhancing actions will be taken during the special session in November.

Reminder: Chapter presidents, when you receive an email from a SLC member regarding a legislator's fundraiser please re-

spond. Our procedures require us to contact chapter presidents to get their input regarding whether MDPAC should support fundraisers by contributing money. The answer can be yes, no, or I don't know the legislators record on senior issues.



MARYLAND-PAC--Using it for Your Benefit

Dave Roseman, MD-PAC Treasurer

The regular session of the Maryland Legislature ended in April and a number of things have happened. First, a number of members of the legislature have had fund raising events. Based upon input from Chapter Presidents the State Legislative Committee voted to support a number of these events. Members whom we supported included Kirill Reznik, Shirley Nathan Pullian, the Team 21 Slate (District 21's entire delegation), Carolyn Howard, Delegate Hubbard, Melanie Griffith, Guy Guzzone, Mark Fisher, Charles Barkley, and Big Ed Riley. At all of these events the NARFE agenda was presented and received as much support as possible given the budget situation of Maryland. Next up will be the special session yet to be called by the Governor. The special session must consider redistricting based upon the census figures for Maryland. Additional items for consideration will be proposed by the Governor and could easily include tax increases especially in gas and transportation. Our Governor is now the Chair of the Democratic Governor's Association and has been traveling and may be using this forum to position himself for some higher political office. In the meantime it

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seems that his priorities will continue to be his energy package and winning the support of activist donors in the Democratic Party. Therefore, we need to double our efforts with the state legislators and work to ensure that our voice is heard. We are working to adapt a North Carolina study that showed the worth of seniors to the State in terms of cost/benefit ratios. We believe this is true in Maryland and that it is a case that should carry significant weight with our legislators. We will need everyone's support to bring this message to their attention. As usual, we will ask for your support in contacting your own delegates and by supporting Maryland-PAC so we can make the case for you. **Mail your check and form as indicated. Thank you for your support.**

MARYLAND/PAC DONATION (MD/PAC)

Name _____

Address _____

Chapter No. _____

Amount Enclosed \$_____. _____

Make check payable to **MD/PAC** (Note on check "Chapter #")

Mail to: Dave Roseman, MD/PAC Chair
6 Thorburn Road
Gaithersburg, MD 20878



United Seniors of Maryland
Chuck Thomas, USM REP

USM has been an effective advocate for seniors in Maryland for many years, and NARFE has been a key member of USM. On

August 2, 2011 the Executive Committee of USM met to discuss possible organizational and operational changes to maintain and improve USM's effectiveness. Representatives from some of the larger organizational members, including AARP and NARFE, were invited to participate. Ted Jensen and I represented the MD Federation. Virtually all aspects of the organization and its operations were debated. No attempt was made to adopt any specific proposals. The ideas generated will be studied further and presented to the Board of Directors at a future date. Among the topics covered were:

LEGISLATION: There have been problems stemming from the failure of some member organizations to respond promptly to the USM Legislative Committee on requests for their positions. One idea was to increase the authority of the Legislative Committee to act on behalf of USM. The Vice President for Legisla-

tion was tasked to develop proposed change for presentation to the Board of Directors.

RALLY: While significant changes have been implemented to improve the effectiveness of the annual rally in Annapolis, the attendance has been lower than expected. Ideas introduced included picking a single burning issue as the focus of the rally and getting a guaranteed prominent guest speaker as a draw. Presently, our speakers, while important and interesting, cannot be relied upon due to schedule conflicts and other priorities. The sense of the group was that the rally concept is still valuable. These events aren't really "rallies" however and a more descriptive name may be in order. These issues will be addressed by the Rally Committee.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE: USM needs more information technology (IT) expertise. Ted Meyerson, the USM President, proposed that USM create a new position, Vice President for IT.

With the expansion to over 80 USM organizational members, communications and decision making have become more difficult. Various ideas were considered including a possibly expanded Executive Committee with more day-to-day responsibilities. The group also talked about ways to give individual members some representation on the Executive Committee. At this point individual members have no voting rights within USM.

MEMBERSHIP: There was a wide ranging discussion of ideas for increasing the number of both organizational and individual members. The new Vice President for Membership suggested that we expand our current recruiting efforts by using more contemporary avenues of communication, including Facebook and Twitter. He suggested a broad strategy and is developing some specific proposals to utilize these tools. The strategy suggested would require regular information inputs from member organizations and a dedicated person or person to do daily updates. There may be a model here for NARFE to utilize.

We expect that some of these ideas will be presented at the next USM Board of Directors meeting at 10 am on September 19, 2011 in the Chesapeake Room, 2664 Riva Road in Annapolis. If you are a member, be sure to attend. Everyone is welcome to attend.. The Maryland Federation and a number of our chapters are organizational members of USM. USM is also trying to increase the number of individual members to add more voices and more support for seniors. It's a worthwhile organization. Annual dues are \$15, which includes a ticket to the Rally in Annapolis. To join go to the USM website, www.unitedseniors.net.



Barry Grier
*2nd Vice President/Membership
 Director*

NOW THAT YOU HAVE A CHAPTER PLAN, WHAT'S NEXT??

The answer to that question is simple. EXECUTE!!

The majority of chapters within the Maryland Federation prepared individual chapter plans which were then combined and distributed throughout the federation. Some were quite unique and others used ideas that have proved successful in the past. All in all, it was a great exercise in innovative ideas and strategies.

Now is the time to put it all to work. But, first, take an inventory of your chapter needs. What recruitment supplies do you have? Don't wait until an event surfaces to make calls for supplies. You have the order form which should be used to supply your recruitment needs. Remember a lot of our brochures have been updated due to the increase in dues. So, some of us are sitting around with materials that are no longer valid.

Chapter banners. Do you have one? If not, why not order one. Not only does it represent a certain pride in the organization but it is a real "eye catcher" at community events. Another helpful aid for all chapter officers is having business cards. If you don't have, order some or print some on your computer. 100 cards for each officer should do. They're good to exchange with other chapter officers for the purpose of networking. Did I say Networking?. You got that right! You will find that networking is one key to blending your chapter ideas with other NARFE chapters. And, you'll also find that NARFE business cards are also good to exchange with others at community events. It's a form of public relations in your wallet. In fact when I give one of mine out I generally say: "If you know of a federal employee or retiree please tell them to give me a call." It works. Use them.

Programs. I put that word in bold to emphasize the importance of them. Do not put your members to sleep with boring chapter meeting programs. A lot of us are not just interested in ceme-

tery plots. Plan months ahead on your program agendas. There are a number of topics that may be of interest not just to your members but to the general public as well.

Yoga and meditation classes have a unique interest among seniors. Such a class I am sure would be of interest; local gardeners for plant care; police speakers on scam artists since seniors are prime targets; and, computer classes are also a good program to share with members. In fact, my chapter has lined up a TV weatherman for our Fall program agenda. Check out what speakers other organizations promote for their members. It may give you some ideas. "Think outside the box".

By now you must know my favorite phrase: "If they don't know us, they can't join us." What public relations programs have you planned to get the word out about NARFE? Recently, I attended the anniversary of the Bay Chapter 1363. It was a grand affair and the chapter received a lot of PR in the local newspaper. It's these kinds of activities that present an excellent PR tool and alerts others in the community about NARFE programs and purpose. I went right back to my chapter and looked up our anniversary date to organize such an event for our group as well. Thanks, chapter 1363!!

Remember, each chapter is different and will have public relations strategies unique to their communities. PR is a necessary exercise in building a chapter and getting the public exposure and recognition for a positive atmosphere for recruitment. And, it's all about recruitment and chapter development.

Speaking of recruitment, several plans have included recruitment contests; however, none planned a recruitment contest for AFEs exclusively. That is a bigger challenge and one that should produce some interesting results. Those that may be recruited could become your representative at their respective agency. Nothing ventured. Nothing gained.

And, don't forget about the Park n' Ride locations in your communities for distributing NARFE magazines, etc. Make sure you wear NARFE logo t-shirts and hats as you hand out your materials. Make sure to include your chapter and ID number on all magazines you distribute. The weather should hold out for a few more months. This can be fun. Try it.

Training. Most of us recently elected new officers. Training is a necessary chapter responsibility in chapter development and

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should be on all of our agendas for the year. There will be federation activities targeting such training opportunities and past chapter presidents and former officers are good in-house trainers for new officers. There are also plenty of officer training brochures available. And, don't forget to check out what may be available for training purposes from NARFE Headquarters.

Speaking of officers, every now and then let your Vice President, or 1st Vice President or 2nd Vice President conduct the chapter meeting. This will give them notice that they are in line for that duty and not just covering a position for the heck of it. This way you develop a strong line of officers for succession. And, don't be afraid to place new members in some of these officer positions.



*Dick Strombotne
Chair, Membership Retention
Committee*

Membership Retention Report

Reinstated Members

The Maryland Federation took the top spot among all the federations in the number of member reinstatements in the first half of 2011 with 461, according to a report from the National Treasurer's office. The next two top ranked federations were California with 449 and Virginia with 402 member reinstatements. The federations rounding out the top ten were FL, PA, TX, NY, NJ, GA, and OH. The top ten ranked federations accounted for 54% of total member reinstatements and the top 26 of the state and DC federations accounted for 83.3% of total reinstatements. Maryland NARFE's 35.2% ratio of reinstatement to non-renewals was exceeded only by Nevada with 35.5% (39/110) and Vermont with 38.1% (8/21).

Priorities for Membership Retention. Chapters and Maryland NARFE have to decide where they will put their efforts to retain members. Maryland NARFE has two centralized programs. One is a monthly mailing to lapsed members. The other is a monthly mailing offering \$5.00 rebates to new members who sign up for dues withholding.

The question for chapter officers is what is the most effective use of available resources, (not including the obvious importance of welcoming new members, introducing them at meetings, holding informative and interesting meeting, and sending informative newsletters.) Keep in mind that NARFE headquarters sends out four dues notices tied to a member's expiration date (ED). The first is sent two months before the ED. The 2nd dues notice is sent in the month of the ED, the 3rd goes out three months after the ED, and the 4th is sent six months

after the ED. In Maryland, almost 8,000 members do **not** receive a dues notice in a given year because they are on dues withholding, are Honorary or National life members, or are not in the final year of a multi-year membership. Over the past three years, about 13 percent of the members who are sent the first dues notice have become lapsed members within a year, about 1700 per year.

My recommendation is that chapters should make it their first retention priority to contact members who are **listed as dropped for non-payment** in the monthly M112 report, but with a one month delay. For example, start with the list of dropped members in the August M112 report as the draft list and remove all the reinstated members after receiving the September M112 in the final list. Why the delay? Because 34 percent of the members who are listed as dropped are subsequently reinstated. Note that some are listed as Reinstated in the same M112 that lists them as dropped.

Maryland NARFE's lapsed member mailings effectively are a 5th dues notice, sent nine months after the ED. It has been quite productive. A total of 80 members rejoined out of 1005 eligible lapsed members for a rejoin rate of 8.0%. These 80 members rejoined for a total of 121 years of membership, which is a 51% increase above their numbers. The estimated total of national dues paid by these 80 members is \$4,676 and the estimated total of chapter dues is \$726, assuming average dues of \$6.00.

Chapter officers may want to build on the fact that lapsed members are now receiving what is, in effect, a fifth dues notice. The Chair of the Membership Retention Committee can provide the names and contact information of any of the chapter's lapsed members who are sent the fifth dues notice to a chapter president or membership chair upon request.

Dues Withholding Incentive Program (DWIP). The number of members on dues withholding in Maryland has steadily increased from 1950 in July 2007 to 2239 in July 2010 and to 2302 in July 2011; an increase of 18 percent over the past four years. Since February 2011, Maryland NARFE has sent letters to mem-

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bers who are nearing the end of their first membership term offering a \$5.00 rebate if they sign up for dues withholding. The letters are sent to coincide with the first dues notice from NARFE headquarters. Thus far, 24 recipients of these mailing have decided to go on dues withholding, a 5% success rate. In those same months, a total of 102 members went on dues withholding. The 24 new DW members added by Maryland NARFE's Dues Withholding Incentive Program were almost 24% of the total, a much higher percentage than would be expected absent the program. The Federation's program supplements the efforts of Chapters to educate their members about the benefits of dues withholding.

The NARFE Membership Retention Advisory Committee, chaired by Frank Impinna, Colorado Federation President, reported its recommendation to the National Executive Board in July. The Committee recommended five goals and outlined several steps to achieve them. The goals are:

1. Increase 1-year Renewals by 5% from 126,000 to 132,300 (an increase of 6,300);
2. Increase Multi-year Renewals by 5% from 45,000 to 47,250 (an increase of 2,250);
3. Increase AFE Renewals by 10% from 24,000 to 26,400 (increase of 2,400);
4. Increase Current Usage of Dues Withholding Option by 10%;
5. Reinstate 3-5% of Lapsed Members from the past 12-18 months.

Maryland NARFE is ahead of the game in meeting Goal #5 for Lapsed Members and has its own Dues Withholding Incentive Program, inspired by the program in Colorado.

Membership Trends. Total membership in Maryland NARFE's 34 chapters fell to 20,063 at the end of July 2011, a drop of 625 from 20,668 in July 2010. The number of voting members fell to 18,832 from 19,382 in July 2010, a drop of 550 (2.92%). It is the first month in many years that the number of voting members has been below 19,000. These declines in the membership numbers for Maryland follow the trend in national membership numbers which declined 4.7% in the year from July 2010 to July 2011.

GEMS listings in Maryland. The list of email addresses for GEMS messages in Maryland now totals 5,617 as of the end of July 2011. This is up from 4,606 at the end of January 2011. The message is getting out about the need for members who use email to sign up to receive GEMS message with timely information about what they can do to protect their earned benefits.

eNARFE Chapter Effects. In the months since NARFE headquarters started promoting the new eNARFE chapter as an alternative to "traditional chapters" for new members in the OPM blind mailing, Maryland NARFE has received 10% fund revenue for 121 eNARFE member living in Maryland. In those same months 122 new members have joined "traditional chapters" after receiving the OPM mailing.





Dick Strombotne

Treasurer

Treasurer's Report

This is a summary report (unaudited) of revenues and expenditures and the resulting net worth of the Maryland Federation of Chapters from December 31, 2010 through July 31, 2011 (see the following financial report.) The Federation is on a two-year budget cycle, reflecting the fact that the state convention held in odd numbered years is a major expense.

Rebates of 10-percent funds from NARFE headquarters totaling \$35,946 made up most of the revenues. The largest expenditure was \$33,736 for the State Convention. The net cost of this year's convention was slightly less than \$22,500.

In addition to funds in the bank checking and savings accounts, the Federation's assets include four certificates of deposit (CDs) with a current value of \$39,727. Three have face values of \$9,000 and mature on 2/27/13, 2/27/14, and 4/7/15 respectively. The fourth CD will mature on 8/31/11; it will be redeemed and a new CD for \$9,000 maturing early in 2016 purchased to complete a four-year ladder of CDs.

MARYLAND FEDERATION OF CHAPTERS FINANCIAL REPORT for CY 2011 As of JULY 31, 2011

ESTIMATED INCOME	TOTAL TO 7/31/2011
National Membership Dues	\$ 35,945.75
Chapter Per Capita Dues	\$ -
Interest - BofA Savings	\$ 67.82
Interest - BofA CDs	\$ 463.55
Income - State Convention	\$ 11,245.00
Matching Funds	\$ 1,550.00
Other Income	\$ 680.00
TOTAL FUNDS AVAILABLE)	\$ 49,952.12
ESTIMATED EXPENDITURES	
Ad Hoc Committees	\$ -
Administration, Gen.	\$ 2,316.24
Alzheimer's/Lupus	\$ 50.19
Chapter Assistance	\$ 2,042.80
Convention, Maryland State	\$ 33,736.39
Executive Committee	\$ 3,636.76
Federation Board Meetings	\$ 4,168.19
Legislation, Federal	\$ 5,873.03
Legislation, State	\$ 2,855.14
Membership/Recruitment	\$ 6,705.35
Newsletter	\$ 1,398.58
Retirement Asst. Ctrs	\$ 85.05
Service Officer	\$ 14.05
Web Site	\$ 90.00
TOTAL FUNDS DISBURSED	\$ 62,971.77
FUNDS SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	\$ (13,019.65)
BEGINNING BALANCE 1/1/2011	\$ 80,399.27
ENDING BALANCE (Net Worth)	\$ 67,379.62

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WBAL Ad



WHAT IS NARFE DOING?

Ronald P. Bowers

Regional Vice President

If you and your Chapter want to keep current on what NARFE is doing and what Congress may be doing, at your next meeting, you should cover the ease of signing up for the NARFE GEMS messages that detail such information at least weekly. There is also a report that goes to all Federation Presidents and the NEB members almost every day with links to articles about the issues being raised that might affect Federal civilian employees and retirees. Many of these articles are triggered by calls from NARFE members who are following the suggestions sent out by the group that is working on this campaign to protect Federal employees and retirees from being misjudged and treated unfairly.

We have won two battles so far:

1. The proposals Rep. Issa, chairman of the House Government Reform and Oversight committee, put forward to freeze all Federal salaries, even ending with-in grade or merit increases were defeated. Every Representative from MD voted against such unfair treatment of Federal civilian employees.
2. The Debt Limit bill calls for an automatic reductions if the new 12-member Committee does not succeed in new legislation. Federal civilian and military pensions are exempt from that automatic reduction, as are Social Security and Medicare benefits.

The struggle will continue and NARFE needs the cash to pay for more ads and other efforts in this struggle. Chapters and members have to take this seriously too and help their friends and neighbors understand the consequences on the people of the country of the attack on Federal employees and many of the programs they administer. And Maryland members have to work to keep their Members of Congress unanimous in protecting the earned rights and benefits of the Federal civilian workforce and annuitants..



Jeanette Green

Secretary

Report Givers

When making a report at a Federation Board meeting please give me a copy of your comments for backup. A hard copy helps ensure the accuracy of the transcription.

Chapter Secretaries

Please send me an F-7 **every** time a change occurs, ie. First and last names, phone number, mailing and email addresses for **each position**, plus dues and day, date, time, location of meeting. If you can't find the proper form in the folder distributed at the last Secretary Seminar then type **all** requested information in an email to me. This information is needed for updating the Federation Directory.

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## Alzheimer's Report

*Barbara Jacobs, Alzheimer's/ Lupus Coordinator*

We just received the report from the National Alzheimer's Association for the period July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2011. Thanks to the generosity of our chapters and many individuals and a planned donation from the estate of Tom and Roma Diehl, Maryland ranked third in donations among all the Federations with a total of \$29,493.18. Thanks are extended to each and everyone who participated in this endeavor.

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT: Tom Diehl served the Maryland Federation as Treasurer for many years. He and his wife Roma loved NARFE, and their good work carries on with this generous donation from their estate. Thinking of others was a hallmark of their lives.

Martin Gilbert, who served well and faithfully as our Alzheimers Coordinator for many years, will no longer continue in that role. Barbara Jacobs has agreed to take over. We thank Martin for his outstanding contributions and welcome Barbara, who also serves as Federation webmaster.

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NARFE Information Technology Advisory Committee (NIAC)

Patrick Dempsey

A few weeks before I retired last December I received an email from Ted Jensen. Ted indicated he needed me for a “special mission”. The mission turned out to something called the NARFE Information Technology Advisory Committee (NIAC). I had intended to join NARFE when I retired (I now know it is not just for retired Feds) and NIAC seemed a lot like my old job. So a few weeks after I retired I was attending my first meeting. The committee is chaired by Charlie Pratt. Charlie maintains a very robust web site for the North Carolina federation. The other members are Bob Drake and Bill Leatham. Bob has had a lot of experience at the chapter level in Virginia was a Chief Information Officer in the Dept. of Defense. Bill Leatham is from the Florida federation and has financial systems expertise. I had no NARFE experience but I had experience running large systems projects.

We presented our findings and recommendations at the NEB meeting last month in Reno. The recommendations fell into short term and long term proposals. This article covers some of the near term recommendations. The group thought our short term recommendations should focus on membership retention and recruitment since this is NARFE’s most critical problem. We also made our proposals as easy to implement as possible with the least impact upon existing systems. The near term recommendations below were mentioned during the presentation. They are meant to be fairly low cost changes with immediate benefits for chapters and federations.

1. NARFE Officer Roster process (F7) needs to be fixed to enable effective NARFE-wide communications
2. Regions, federations & chapters need simpler and better organized monthly data (M-112)
3. Membership data (M-114) needs to be available on-line
4. NARFE needs an Internet Usability Methodology
5. Regions, federations, and chapters need to get to their data on the national website with a maximum of three “clicks”
6. E-mail address coverage needs to be increased from 20%
7. NARFE needs a Configuration Management Board to represent all Regions and manage future systems improvements
8. NARFE needs to make more use of IT collaboration tools (HQ, Region, Federations) to reduce travel costs

The first three items involve the same basic idea. NARFE needs to move from printed reports to online data. The processes to-

day are based upon periodic reports. As an example, a chapter officer needs to contact people who have allowed their membership to lapse. The officer needs to look through a potentially large report that contains a lot of information not needed to call lapsed members. Also, the monthly may be out of date by the time the calls are made. Our recommendation is that **NARFE provide online reports that are geared toward specific functions**. For the person who wants to contact lapsed members, there needs to be a report that shows only those people who need to be contacted. Some federations and chapters have downloaded and manipulated the information in the monthly reports to do this already. Implementation at the national level would make this extra work unnecessary and would mean that the information would be timely. People who renewed their membership after the monthly report was printed would not show up on the online report. We understand that this will not mean that the monthly reports will go away any time soon. Some people prefer those reports or use that data for local systems.

Today NARFE does not have a large number of email addresses for the membership. Increasing the number of email addresses would help reduce mailing costs as well as improving communications.

The next major recommendation is that the new processes are developed with something called a **Usability Methodology**. This means is that people who write the software (developers) need to talk to the people who will be using the system (users). In the case of NARFE we think that the developers need to talk to the users who are the least comfortable with computers. If someone with limited confidence can use the report then it will be usable by almost everyone. The idea is to make systems easy to use. This is something that sounds simple but requires discipline to do. How many of us eat at three balanced meals per day and get a reasonable amount of exercise per week?

We think the national web site can be improved. This is a moving target to some extent. We discussed some recommendations that were implemented by the HQ systems team before we had a chance to propose them. However, we think that more work can be done. We also think that this is an area where the “Usability” idea can help. For example, HQ staff would ask some typical members to find information or to perform tasks using the web site. If they have trouble then the site may need to be changed to make it easier to use.

As NARFE moves forward on the new processes we recommend that a **Configuration Management Board (CMB)** be established to guide the process. A CMB can do several things. It will allow for a systems planning process that is transparent. As an exam-

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ple, if someone from a federation makes a suggestion then it will be tracked and the final decision documented. Today suggestions are considered, but the person who made the suggestion may or may not be told what happened to it. It will also provide an opportunity for a larger number of members to have input into the process, either directly or by contacting their representative. Again, the people who use the systems will have more involvement in the process. Perhaps most importantly, a CMB) would provide some long term continuity to the Information Technology (IT) process. Systems development is a long-term process that should stay on track as new National officers come and go.

Our Committee did most of its business online. I had participated in online meetings a few times but had never relied on them as the primary way to conduct business. For those of you have not done this before it is rather simple. I had to download an application one time. To attend a meeting I just started the application and entered the meeting number. My laptop has a built in microphone and speaker so I didn't even need to use a headset. I could see what the meeting leader had on his screen and we could all talk to each other. Charlie Pratt had an account with GoToMeeting.com so we used that service. We think online collaboration tools are the way of the future. They will never completely replace face to face meetings but they can replace most of them. The big advantage in online meetings is the savings in money and travel time. For about \$50 per month our Committee could meet every day.

We know I that the report, as any IT related report, has some limitations. These reflect the dynamic nature of NARFE and the IT world. While the NIAC committee was meeting during the year there was a lot of activity throughout NARFE. We focused on the situation that existed in January 2011. As stated earlier, we made recommendations in the report that were already being implemented by July. Also, any long term recommendation involving technology must be reconsidered periodically. Even after one year, which is a reasonable timeframe for implementing the near term recommendations, NARFE will need to look at the longer term recommendations again. This is why our Committee strongly recommended that the NEB establish a Configuration Management Board. The CMB can continually reevaluate the IT situation and guide NARFE for years to come to keep systems user friendly and take advantage of new technology in a cost effective manner.

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## NARFE Montgomery County Area Council's (MCAC) July 27, 2011 Event for AFE's

*Larry Lange, Coordinator, MCAC and Treasurer, Gaithersburg Chapter 581*

The MCAC meets several times from October to June each year to plan an event for active federal employees (AFE's). This year we planned a "meet and greet" informal event that was held at The Village at Rockville (formerly the National Lutheran Home) on Wednesday evening, July 27<sup>th</sup>, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

The Council, in its meetings over the last several months, composed a postcard to be mailed to these AFE's inviting them to our "meet and greet" event. Dick Strombotne sorted the Federation's databases for us for the names and addresses of the 650 AFE's in Montgomery County. Jennifer Ramsey, president of Rockville Chapter 1127, has for the last several months held her chapter's monthly meetings at The Village at Rockville, and has been very pleased with their facilities. The Village had our event in their social room, Lang Hall, and for a very reasonable fee provided our attendees with chilled bottles of water, carafes of coffee, meatballs, brushetta, and a platter of antipasto. We were very happy that NARFE's Assistant Legislative Director, Julie Tagen, accepted our invitation to come to our event; she made a PowerPoint presentation mostly centered on NARFE's *Protect America's Heartbeat* campaign, and did an excellent job. Wednesday, July 27<sup>th</sup> was also the "national call in day," and it was interesting to learn at our event that evening that many of our attendees had not only called their senators and representatives that day, but had trouble getting through to them because of the volume of calls. It was disappointing that only five of our 650 postcard recipients RSVP'd; thanks to Jennifer Ramsey of the Rockville Chapter and Linda Cohen of the Aspen Hill Chapter, phone calls were made to several persons, and we had a total turnout of 23 persons (eight of whom were MCAC members).

## Congressman Van Hollen's 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Federal Employees Health Benefits Forum

Congressman Chris Van Hollen will hold his 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Federal Employees Health Benefits forums in cooperation with NARFE on Monday morning, November 14 in Wheaton and on Thursday evening, November 17 in Rockville.

Experts on federal health insurance plans and representatives of health insurance carriers will be present at both sessions to discuss various health plan options, the impact of new health care reforms and answer individual questions. All are welcome.

Mon., November 14, 2011  
9 a.m. – 11 a.m.  
(Panel begins at 9:30 a.m. )  
Holiday Park Senior Center  
3950 Ferrara Drive  
Wheaton, MD 20906

Thurs., November 17, 2011  
7 p.m. – 9 p.m.  
(Panel begins at 7:30p.m.)  
Executive Office Building  
101 Monroe Street  
Rockville, MD 20850

For more information, contact:

Office of Congressman Chris Van Hollen  
51 Monroe Street, Suite 507  
Rockville, MD 20850  
301-424-3501  
Fax: 301-424-5992

## Public Relations: New Efforts in the Works

*by Dorothy Campbell, Publicity & Public Relations Chair (1747)*

My thanks to President Ted Jensen and the Executive Committee for appointing me chair of the Federation's Publicity & Public Relations Committee. I look forward to working with them as well as with all you handling P & PR in your chapters.

While Protect America's Heartbeat, the Federation's internet ad program and the current PR projects now being carried out by some chapters are great, we can do more – particularly at the chapter level. Our main issues – today's unjust attacks on all public workers and the dwindling NARFE membership -- call for stepped-up public relations efforts of all kinds. And while I realize that all chapters don't operate at the same level, all chapters can do something.

To help increase chapter PR proficiency, I plan to have a questionnaire ready for the October 3 Federation Executive Board meeting. The information I derive from that form will enable me to develop a statewide P & PR program and determine how the P & PR Committee can assist individual chapters. In addition, I hope to use the feedback to develop a training session for Chapter P & PR chairs. And thanks in advance for your cooperation.

Finally, if anyone wishes to become a member of the Committee, please contact me at 301-464-6372 or [Dcbowie@aol.com](mailto:Dcbowie@aol.com).

**As a closing to the MD Fall Federation Newsletter, the following invocation is for your perusal....**

### INVOCATION

40<sup>th</sup> NARFE MD Federation Convention  
Bowie, MD May 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2011  
Chaplain: Larry Lange, Gaithersburg Chapter 581

Good morning, Ladies and Gentlemen.

As we begin our 40<sup>th</sup> NARFE MD Federation Convention, may we pause for a few moments of individual reflection. We're gathered here today because of our pride in the contributions we have all made in our careers with the federal government – and in our continuing commitment to NARFE, to ourselves, and to our fellow retirees and active federal employees in helping to ensure that our earned benefits will be protected in these very difficult economic times our country is currently experiencing. Our federal government careers spanned an amazing diversity – and each of us in our own right worked to ensure that the myriad facets of the federal government offered the very best that was available to the American people. May we work harmoniously together during this convention, and may we profit from the ideas, opinions, and camaraderie of our fellow Maryland NARFE members. We are especially thankful for the many hours of diligent work of our Maryland federation leaders and members that have gone into making this Convention a beneficial and enjoyable meeting. These are indeed very challenging times for our country, and for NARFE – together all the members of the Maryland Federation can, and will, meet those challenges head on.

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National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association
Maryland Federation of Chapters – Chartered April 5, 1956
Maryland Federation Newsletter

Protect Your Retirement

Come Visit

Maryland Federation of Chapters
Gerald Gillman
1604 Dublin Rd.
Silver Spring, MD 20892
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

The Maryland Federation Website
at: WWW.MDNARFE.ORG
With Links for Easy Browsing!

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
Silver Spring, MD
Permit # 5715



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

2011

October 4	Federation Board Meeting, Bowie
November 1	Federation Training, Bowie
November 29	Winter Newsletter Deadline

2012

February 7	Federation Board Meeting, Bowie
March 1	Resolutions Deadline to Secretary
April 30-May 1	Maryland Mini Convention, Bowie
August 26-30	National Convention, Reno