



National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association Gaithersburg Chapter 581

In our fifty-fifth year of supporting most of the Montgomery Upcounty Communities

June 2011

SPECIAL SUMMER EDITION

CONVENTION MARKS 55th ANNIVERSARY OF NARFE'S MD FEDERATION

Barry Grier, 2ND Vice President/Publicity, Maryland Federation

The Maryland State Federation of the National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association concluded its 55th anniversary celebration recently in Bowie with over 200 delegates in attendance representing approximately 21,000 members from 34 chapters throughout the state.

Commenting on proposals on Capitol Hill to reduce the federal workforce, guest speaker for the two-day convention, John Gage, National President of the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), described the recent House budget plan as an "ideological attack that we cannot tolerate" and that "federal employees were not the cause of this deficit." Adding that "millions of jobs are now on the chopping block" and that the recommendations of the President's Debt Commission were "horrifying," Gage concluded that he was "not happy with either side" of the political aisle.

During the convention, hosted by the Greater Bowie/Crofton Chapter and held at the Bowie Comfort Inn, delegates also heard from Paul Carew, NARFE National Vice President. Carew stated that "NARFE is fighting back" through the *Protect America's Heartbeat* campaign launched recently by the 300,000+ member organization. Explaining that the federal workforce was less than two percent of the budget calling it "low hanging fruit" (meaning the first to be picked) in terms of the proposed budget cuts, Carew said "We don't mind being part of the solution but not all of the solution."

The convention agenda also included election of the following officers to serve the Maryland Federation for the next two years: Ted Jensen (Frederick), President; Evelyn Kirby (Chester), 1st Vice President; Barry Grier (St. Leonard), 2nd Vice President; Jeanette Green (Waldorf), Secretary and Dick Strombotne (Gaithersburg), Treasurer.

Headquartered in Washington, D.C., NARFE recently celebrated its 90th anniversary, founded by 14 federal workers in 1921. The organization focuses on "safeguarding and improving the earned rights and benefits of active and retired federal employees, representing over five million federal workers, retirees, spouses and their survivors." The latest government data indicates Maryland has 282,500 active and retired federal employees.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE...

Mary Anne Scott

Can you believe it...summer's almost here. This is our last newsletter of the chapter's fiscal year...and my last as your president. Expect to see the next newsletter in early September. Enjoy your summer and get a good start by joining us for the Annual Chapter Picnic on Tuesday June 14th at 11:30 a.m. at Bohrer Park.

The focus of this special edition is two-fold - to provide highlights from the Maryland State Convention and further information on NARFE's national campaign to fight drastic cuts in federal pay and benefits whose slogan is "Protect America's Heartbeat." (See page 3.) While issues regarding the ongoing budget debate will be discussed in the NARFE magazine, the most up-to-date source for what's happening that we need to be aware of is through GEMS. If you haven't signed up, please do so, especially if you are an active federal employee.

The Maryland State Convention was held on May 2-3 in the

Bowie Comfort Inn and some of the highlights are contained in the press release by VP Barry Grier above. The two-day format worked well - there was only one resolution considered and the election was not contested. Attendance was up from the 2009 convention with our chapter having the second largest delegation, behind that of the host chapter Greater Bowie/Crofton. President Ted Jensen summarized our status well as observed through the convention activities, saying we have a good organization, and doing good things for others as well as ourselves.

The keynote was provided by Paul Carew, National Vice President. He clearly recognizes that the future of NARFE will depend on its ability to adapt and change with the changing environment. Among other things, he noted an ongoing activity to update head-quarter's use of information technology to better utilize current tools.

The convention wasn't all work. At the end of each day door prizes provided were awarded. Three of our delegates were lucky enough to have their names drawn.

FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE REPORT

Jim Cowie, Chair MDFed Federal Legislative Committee Coordinator for District 4 and more



There has never been a time in living memory when the Federal Community has been under such a sustained attack as has happened recently in Congress. The two-year freeze on federal salaries was the first step by a mind-set that does not appear to understand the contributions that are made by the Federal Community. A proposal to halt any step increases and merit awards in two years was defeated, but undaunted, this has reappeared in a proposal to extend the freeze time frame to five years. Other elements under consideration include calculating an annuity on the basis of the high five years of salaries rather than the current high three, changing the formula for the definition of COLAs to reduce the amount of an increase, eliminating the defined benefit component of FERS salaries (the Thrift Savings Plan elements and Social Security contributions would remain; if this happened we would need to redefine our rules for eligibility to join NARFE since future FERS employees would not qualify under the existing rules), and increased contributions to health coverage and pension payments.

These incessant attacks on the Federal Community seem to be based on an ideology which does not appear to understand the factors that have contributed to the rising deficit, including two wars, an unfunded Prescription Drug benefit, greater emphasis on Homeland Security, an increasing population and steps that needed to be taken to respond to the recession and recent disasters such as Katrina and the Gulf Oil Disaster. The current budget proposals by the President and the Republican alternative will both increase the deficit for many years to come by 7 trillion dollars or more. Hence, if reducing the deficit is a primary objective, then all the elements that contribute need to be addressed, and the heavy concentration on the discretionary budget, which determines the contribution made by the Federal Sector needs to stop, since this amounts to only about 15% of the total. NARFE might also need to consider whether it should continue to concentrate on protesting every proposal that affects us negatively, or whether it should also promote ideas of what the overall deficit reduction strategy should include that NARFE would consider to be fair to all parties, rather than our being asked to shoulder a disproportionate share of the pain.

If the attacks on the Federal community continue and more elements are implemented, the most likely outcomes will be that more staff will leave before the damaging changes are implemented than the service can afford to maintain quality, and potential recruits will respond to the apparent low regard for public service by taking their skills elsewhere.

(Jim Cowie continued on page 3.)

STATE LEGISLATIVE REPORT

Dave Roseman, MD PAC Chair and MD Fed Budget Officer



While the State Legislative session for this year has ended, this does not end the political activity in the State. Now that the session is over the State Legislators are allowed to raise funds for future campaigns. Many of our delegates and senators are having fund-raising and other events to report on their activities for the past session. The State Legislative Committee has received numerous requests for funds from MD-PAC based upon responses from the local chapters making contributions and attending these events. In addition, many trial balloons are being sent up with respect to an upcoming special session of the legislature. Every ten years after the census is completed the State legislature gets to review legislative boundaries in special session. Governor O'Malley has proposed several possible items to be addressed in this special session including a transportation tax or a raise in the sales tax. During the coming months these and any number of issues will be brought up and suggested for the special session. All of you need to carefully follow this in your local papers and use every opportunity to talk to your legislators and make your points.

At the same time do not forget that the Montgomery County Council and our County Executive are still fighting and posturing over a county budget. The only thing we can be sure of is less services and higher fees and taxes. Again we must be vigilant and make our feelings known.

Lastly, the State Legislative Committee is working on an overall framework for presenting our case to our legislators and the Governor. We are working on framing the benefits to the State that derive from seniors living in the state such as volunteer time, spending of discretionary income and minimal need of expensive state and local services such as schools. Anyone interested in working on this or who has some ideas or suggestions they would like to share should contact me at dave.roseman@comcast.net or 240-401-6628. Also, don't forget to make contributions to MD-PAC. Checks should be made out to MD-PAC and mailed to MD-PAC, 6 Thorburn Road, Gaithersburg, MD 20878.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Larry Lange, Treasurer

All Funds Summary, May 19, 2011

Checking Account	\$12,273.21
Certificate of Deposit (Restricted Chapter Life Membership funds)	\$2,977.29
TOTAL CHAPTER ASSETS	\$15,250.50
Working Capital	\$12,273.21

MEMBERSHIP NOTES

Jim Short,
Membership Chairman



For the month of April we added nine new members, nine members were reinstated, but we lost seventeen members, including one who transferred to another chapter. As a result our chapter realized a net gain of one member.

Please welcome the following new members:

Penny Coleman • Helen Barr • Lina Dalal • Raghavan Varadachari • Ryna Beth Marinenko • John Potter Nancy Snider • Larry Barker • Michael Hill.

Please welcome back the following reinstated members: Phyllis Eddy • Joyce Emelio • Patricia Leland Dennis Leland • Joann McConnell • Kelly Bauer • Jack Spiegel • William Wallace • Walter Pancik.

We are sad to report the following death:

Robert F. Fudali.

The following members were dropped for non-payment of dues as of January 1. If you know any of these people, please give them a call and try to convince them that they should renew their memberships and encourage dues withholding.

Mary Belliveau • Irving Davids • John Dean • Herbert Dolinka • William Fishbein • David Gregg • Katherine Gugulis • Stephen Hays • Marlene Haywood • Rose Kaplan • Thuy Messegee • Thomas Murphy • Heather Olusoga • Heather Pierce • Joan Postow.

(Jim Cowie continued from Page 2.)

Most of the brunt of the proposed changes would be felt by current and future Federal staff, with health contributions being the primary area of concern for existing retirees.

Elsewhere in this newsletter is information about how chapter members can contribute to our defense, by participating in the Protect America's Heartbeat campaign. The two things that our members can do that would be most helpful are to contribute to this campaign, and to recruit anyone that is eligible to join NARFE by explaining that their benefits are more vulnerable than ever before, and NARFE is the best hope to protect their interests.

THANKS TO THE 581 MAY ASSEMBLY PARTY PARTICIPANTS

Thanks to our faithful members who gather to make the 581 Newsletter ready for mailing. Sorry we don't always have space to thank you individually each month; your efforts are always very much appreciated. We had fourteen assemblers! And many thanks to our extremely diligent proof-readers on whom we depend to make this Newsletter what it is!

PROTECT AMERICA'S HEARTBEAT

Roger Dahlman (excerpted from NARFE's webpage)

America's federal employees protect this country's heartbeat

"Federal employees ensure our food is safe and our air is healthy, among many other important functions. Some spend their days fighting the spread of infectious disease, while others raise the alarm whenever a storm is coming." (from the NARFE Protect America's Heartbeat web page). We need to preserve the collective **heartbeat** of the federal workforce that protects us and drives America's progress, while keeping the values that attract and retain the best American workers.

What can Chapter members do to communicate our role in protecting America's heartbeat? As an active or retired federal employee who dedicated your life to protecting America's heartbeat, share your story by telling:

- Where are you from? What is/was your position? For how long have you served/did you serve as a federal employee?
- How would America be different if there weren't people serving in your position?
- What's your proudest contribution to your country/community during your service?

These guidelines are from the NARFE web page, and a story-form outline is available at Chapter meetings.

What will be done with the stories? The Chapter will collect stories from members, screen them for high visibility and impact, and they'll be forwarded to Evelyn Kirby and Jim Cowie, who will include them with other Maryland Federation contributions, and pass them onto NARFE HQ. Alternatively, the stories can be shared directly with NARFE HQ, if they are drafted on the "American Stories" web page, <http://www.narfe.org/heartbeat/stories.cfm>. Members who use the story web page will find several examples produced by retired employees. Members who post their stories directly to the web page should also send a copy to Roger Dahlman to help provide a total picture of the Chapter's contribution to protecting America's heartbeat. At HQ, Julie Tagen and a contractor will be communicating the stories to legislative interests and media outlets. We also have other suggestions for use and communication of the stories by the Chapter.

What else is being done to highlight the role of federal workers in protecting America's heartbeat? There are many reports of accomplishments by federal employees that could be featured by NARFE as examples of protecting America's heartbeat. For example, the "Sammie awards" honoring distinguished federal employees for excellence in service, security and

PROTECT (Continued on back)

**Gaithersburg
Chapter 581**

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**ELECTION OF CHAPTER
OFFICERS FOR 2011 - 2013**

At the May 24th Chapter meeting, the members endorsed the slate of officers agreed to at the May 19th Board meeting. The issue of the lack of a nominee for chapter president was solved by past chapter presidents. Larry Lange and John Padan agreed to share the position as part of a team that would include additional Board members. As the Chapter is limited to a single president, and Larry Lange has other chapter duties, John Padan will be the nominal chapter president.

The slate of officers to be installed at the June 14th picnic will be:

Chapter President	Larry Lange and John Padan
First Vice President	Joseph Martin
Second Vice President	George Donovan
Secretary	Marty Strombotne
Treasurer	Larry Lange
Financial Secretary	Donnie Sue Ferrell

PROTECT (continued from page 3.)

scientific contributions. Also there are news reports of exceptional career contributions such as Harold Varmus' lifelong fight against cancer, Trudy Givens' suggestion on how to save \$16M and Adm. Thad Allen's leadership in disaster management with the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. We are having discussions with HQ about how to feature these and other significant accomplishments in the context of protecting America's heartbeat. We will also be seeking from the membership other reports of exceptional contributions by federal employees.

Three important Websites

www.mdnarfe.org/chapter0581

This website gives you all the contact information that is usually on the back of our Newsletter and other information. If you don't use the Internet - See the back of any 2011 Chapter Newsletter.

www.narfe.org - NARFE information at the National level.

www.mdnarfe.org - NARFE information at the State level.

The last word is - Look at the Upcoming Events in our May 2011 News. Put the August & September dates on your calendar so you won't miss anything!

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