

WHERE AND WHEN

Unless otherwise noted*, our Members Meetings are held on the 4th Tuesdays at 1:00 PM at the Holiday Park Senior Center, 3950 Ferrara Dr., Silver Spring, MD 20906, 240-777-4999; ample free parking; covered parking in rear. Additionally, most meetings are captured on Zoom and recorded. Virtual access instructions can be found on Page 3, in the "Relieve Stress & Save your Plants/Trees" article.

UPCOMING MEETINGS/ACTIVITIES (Open to all)

Chapter:

- **Members Meetings:** Mar 25, Apr 22*, May 20*, Jun 10*
- **Newsletter Input Deadlines:** Mar 14, Apr 15
- **Board Meetings:** Mar 5, Apr 2, May 7, Jun 2

Outside Events:

- **Mid-County Citizens Advisory Board (MCCAB) -** Thursday March 20, 2025 at 7PM, virtual, contact Luisa Cardona at 240-777-8101 for link.
- **Acoustics and Ales - Free - All ages welcome!** Saturday March 8, 2025 from 11am to 2pm North Four Corners Local Park - 315 University Boulevard West, Silver Spring, MD 20901 - Celebrate St. Patrick's Day a week early with your loved ones as you enjoy, live music from Barleyjuice Trio, local craft brews and food!

Our Facebook Page: NARFE Chapter 1892, Aspen Hill.

Chapter Webpage: <https://sites.google.com/view/narfe-chapter-1892/home>

Donations for Alzheimer's Research

An easy way to donate funds for NARFE-Alzheimer's Research is to collect your loose change (dimes, quarters, etc.) in a cup or plastic baggie and bring your donation(s) to one of our monthly chapter meetings. In the last 3 years, over \$200 has been collected this way! Start your collection today -- thank you!!!

Cathy Hobbs, Alzheimer's Chair, NARFE Chapter 1892

President's Message

I cry--for federal employees who have lost their jobs without cause, those who are about to lose their jobs through Reductions in Force (RIFs) without due process, and those who took buyouts but later received dismissal letters and fear their resignation terms won't be honored.

People call and email me all day asking what they can do to help. How, they ask, is it possible to ignore laws and regulations? They are worried that democracy is gone.

Federal employees are being attacked in multiple ways. **We fight back** by getting Congress to stop officials that ignore the Constitution. Please:

- Attend the rallies and protests. **Be sure that the email address you have in the NARFE system is accurate so you can be notified.**
- Support NARFE's lawsuit to protect the merit system.
- Join unions, if you can, to add strength to their lawsuits.
- Encourage feds/retirees to join NARFE to increase our power.
- Give money to NARFE PAC's, money talks. (March is NARFE PAC month!)
- **Write or call your congressmen and senators** (see NARFE's website on Advocacy for identification and contact information of your representatives).

Then, in the next election, consider which legislators responded to your needs. **Our democracy can work** if the courts and Congress stand up for integrity and law.

May the Force be with us – Sarah

Legislative Update

By Steve Greenberg, Vice President and Legislation Chair,
NARFE Chapter 1892

There will be complex and engrossing legislative sessions this spring, at both the federal and state levels. It is possible that we will have never seen their like before.

At the recent NARFE Maryland Federation meeting (February 4), Bob Doyle, State Legislative Committee (SLC) Co-chair, presented a list of no fewer than nineteen pieces of legislation, currently under consideration in Annapolis, that are of particular interest to NARFE members. The most significant are bills to give state income tax credits to individuals residing with and caring for elderly parents (a maximum personal tax credit of \$3000), entered as SB 104; a modification/reduction of state income tax on the retirement income of veterans residing in Maryland (HB 60); and a bill to tighten state regulation of Electronic Fund Transfers (EFT), an all-too-common way of defrauding the elderly (HB 332). The most important is SB155/HB327, which would allow an annual tax credit on Long Term Care insurance premiums. Currently, only a one-time credit is permitted. SLC members have testified in support of all of these measures.

Unfortunately, these measures will need to be evaluated and voted upon in the cold light of a dramatic state budget deficit for FY26. Current estimates (which seem to get worse every day) project a \$3 billion shortfall for FY26, which could double by FY30. The Governor's proposed \$67.3 billion FY26 budget, while proposing \$2 billion in cuts, still represents a 1% increase over FY25. Supporting tax cuts and credits for seniors could be hard in such a climate.

All of this is dwarfed by the plethora of Executive Orders and Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) actions sweeping through the federal government. With the stated goals of eliminating "corruption," trimming the size (and payroll) of the federal work force, and making the Executive Branch more responsive to the will of the Oval Office, it is impossible to predict where this will all go. The ongoing Senate approval of Cabinet nominees only

underscores the consolidation of authority in the White House.

The effect on federal employees has been dramatic but often confusing. The offer to two million feds of a buyout finally was partially approved by the courts (something like 70,000 accepted), but the offer was closed the following day. OPM has advised various agencies to terminate as many as 200,000 recent hires still on probation. USAID, and American aid abroad, is in turmoil. The DOGE visit to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau resulted in the firing of the Bureau's director, and a posting by the DOGE head on X that read "CFPD RIP." The Board was created by an act of Congress. Such actions also underscore the importance of state legislation (such as HB 332 discussed earlier) to guard against financial fraud. In a broader arena, the questions will be hotly debated: how much control does the Executive Branch have over entities created by the Legislative Branch? How does the Judicial Branch enforce its decisions? It's back to third grade Civics class and the separation of powers. Will Executive action replace legislation?

*The limits of unilateral Oval Office action over the federal workforce has yet to be determined. NARFE has already joined in several suits protecting the rights of Civil Service employees, as have a number of unions. **The courts will have their say, as will the Congress. In the coming months, there may well be a totally new understanding of our system of checks and balances.***

Membership Report

In January, 9 new members joined our chapter! Welcome new members, Laura Shane, Lynn Miller, Susanne Miller, Sandra Pearlman, Susan Schulken, Jenn Colten, Peter Hendrickson, Bruce Hemmer, Kaitlin Devine. We are so glad that you decided to be part of Chapter 1892!

We have 6 new prospective members – Phyllis Thomas, Long Chen, Sudha Srinivasan, Stacey Walker, Sean Bath, and Tiyo Fronte. If you know them, please tell them that we're the fun chapter that also gets things done! Ask them to join us!

Chapter 1892 Leadership

President.....Sarah Richards
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Vice-President.....Steve Greenberg
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Secretary.....Myron Chace
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USPS Mail Manager.....Merle Biggin
301-814-6047
NARFE PAC.....Bob Kammer
301-847-9820
Newsletter Editor.....Filomena Chau
301-642-6741
Sunshine.....Minnedore Green
240-839-7043
Special ProjectsDiane Boehr, Linda Jacks

Need Alternate Employment and Retirement Options? Preparation Tips

There are two good articles if you are facing job loss.

- Tobenkin, David, "Preparing for a Revived Schedule F: Replacing Angst with Action", March 2025 issue, NARFE Magazine, (Pages 30-40).
- Singletary, Michelle, "Federal Staff Who Lose Their Jobs Should Do This Next", Color of Money, The Washington Post, Sunday, February 16, 2025, (Pages G-1, 2).

Important tip:

Review your Official Personnel folder (OPF), to make sure it contains complete evidence of your years of federal/military service and grades, series, and job titles for each grade. Print and keep your copies.

You do not want to apply for retirement, thinking you have 30 years of federal/military service, but your OPF only contains SF-50s Notices of Personnel Action for 27 years! *It could affect your eligibility for retirement on an immediate annuity and/or the amount of your retirement annuity!*

I saw this happen to many people! Fill in those gaps now!

By Filomena Chau, Editor

Relieve Stress and Save your Plants and Trees

Gardening reduces stress and improves your mental health, but not if your plants and trees keep dying. **Two presentations** will help bring back the peace that gardening should provide. The first, "**Easy to Grow Houseplants**" discusses some common house plants and provides information on plant selection, locations, containers, and tools required (including for those with mobility issues and special needs). Also, the presenter, Master Gardener Bonita Condon, will tell you about maintenance and propagation of your plants, and common pests and diseases.

The **second presentation is about how to better plant and care for trees**. So many of us plant trees incorrectly shortening their life. A little know-how will keep them healthier and alive longer.

Join us: Tuesday, March 25, starting at 1 PM. Mark your calendars, tell your friends, ask your questions, and enjoy refreshments!

How to attend this meeting:

In person--join us at the Holiday Park Senior Center, 3950 Ferrara Dr., Classroom 20, Silver Spring (Wheaton), MD 20906.

(RSVP at BachJChauF@gmail.com or call 301-589-7465 as space is limited.)

Online--access the meeting via Zoom using a computer (best way), tablet, or smart phone. Just hit this link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84654406850?pwd=Ky4PTu0RMeNxbV8bxHDF9dGA1OQ0y.1>.

Meeting ID: 846 5440 6850

Passcode: 307663

Audio-only--call 301-715-8592 and key in the ID and Passcode above if requested.

Note: meeting to be recorded and available on Chapter website.

Jan 28th Members Meeting Briefing (Edited from Myron Chace's Written Accounts)

Sarah Richards, President, NARFE Aspen Hill Chapter 1892, welcomed everyone. Attendees were from our chapter and from other chapters (Western Montgomery, Wheaton/Glenmont, White Oak chapters and the now closed Leisure World Chapter).



Steve Greenberg and Paul Schwartz

Paul Schwartz, outgoing Vice President, NARFE Aspen Hill Chapter 1892, and incoming NARFE

Region II Vice President, administered the oath of office to Dr. Stephen Greenberg, now Vice President NARFE Aspen Hill Chapter 1892.

The first presentation was *Wandering: Understanding, Prevention and Preparedness*. The first speaker was Laurie Reyes, Montgomery County Police Officer. Officer Reyes introduced her colleagues: Amy Stoughton, Former Police Officer



Amy Stoughton, Laurie Reyes, and Mike Conrad

(retired) and Mike Conrad, Volunteer. Officer Reyes heads the Department of Police Autism, Intellectual Developmental Disabilities, Alzheimer's, Dementia Unit.

Its mission is to provide a "layered approach" to safety, awareness and action through education, outreach, empowerment, follow up, and response. From 2004 to 2025, the number of people diagnosed with autism has increased, resulting in more calls for dealing with people on the autism spectrum. The Autism/IDD police unit follows up with families and caregivers. In 2024, this unit performed 700 follow-ups. At a follow-up visit, families and others learn about the special unit,

where to seek professional help, and safety tips and helpful changes at home. Recommendations may include 1) adding a fence, 2) installing cameras, 3) installing special locks, 4) installing dedicated alarms, 5) having the at-risk individual wear an identification bracelet or carry a cellphone. Further steps may include partnering with appropriate organizations, such as Montgomery County Public Schools, informing neighbors (perhaps by letter), and considering swimming lessons as autism/IDD individuals are often drawn to pools, lakes, and ponds.

The police officers' presentation was supplemented with a brochure containing helpful wandering prevention safety tips, plus how to inform neighbors in writing, where to obtain wandering safety kits, and contacting community resources, such as partnering agencies that offer education, outreach, training, or support. Requests for brochures, safety kits, and additional information may be submitted by visiting www.montgomerycountymd.gov/aidd.

During a brief question-and answer session, the officers recognized the challenges in elopement situations of not knowing who has independence and who doesn't. (Elopement is a police term to describe an autistic individual who walks or wanders away.) A key determination is learning if the wandering may be described as "missing at risk." They acknowledged, however, that there are more serious calls and the need to work with officers. First action: Call 911. What is the situation? For example, are weapons present? Has there been violence? Are bystanders requiring protection?



Jeanne Fox-Alston

The second presentation was *Living Comfortably and Safely*, featuring Professional Organizer Jeanne Fox-Alston of Your Space Made to Order (spacetoorder.com). Ms. Alston's goal is to help seniors live better and more comfortably, including helping with a move to a smaller living

space. Ms. Alston discussed three topics: downsizing, living in small spaces, and ageing in place. With downsizing, for many people inertia is

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what holds them back from taking the first step. Start downsizing now, she emphasized. Then, she identified places in the

home to make a start. "Where to live next" may be good to keep in mind when deciding about what to cull or keep. Donating furniture and decluttered/unused items to charities, such as A Wider Circle and Habitat for Humanity

may be the easiest approach, especially when facing costs associated with moving and transport.

Making the most of small space relies on furniture sized right for the space. Vertical space in smaller living places may be an asset for adding shelving and foldup writing or work surfaces. With good planning and appropriate furnishings, a smaller living space can look spacious and present an attractive visual appearance.

With ageing in place, safety is the important factor. Good lighting and clear walkways are critical. Tripping hazards (such as fringed rugs) should be removed. Examine shelving and other spots to determine if things are easy to reach. You can reach Jeanne Fox-Alston at jeanne@spacetoorder.com. You can find other professional organizers as well at National Association of Professional Organizers (NAPO) - Napo.net.

March is NARFE-PAC Month!

You can make a difference by donating to NARFE's PAC. Go to www.narfe.org/advocacy/narfe-pac/ or fill out the form on page 27 of the March 2025 issue of the NARFE magazine.



Sarah and Officer Reyes

FREE Tax Help

The **Community Action Agency's VITA program** will offer free tax help at four sites January 21 - April 10, 2025. Appointments are for Montgomery County residents with a combined household income of \$67,000 or less. For more information, see

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cashback/> or call 240-777-1123.

The **American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) Tax-Aide Program** provides free tax preparation for anyone but focuses on people over 50 or who have a low to moderate income. For more information, go to:

<https://AARPFoundation.org/taxaide> or call 1-888-227-7669.

A Few Happy Pictures--January 28th Mtg



Birthday Celebration



Sarah Richards, President

Photography by: Steve Greenberg, Ron Shansby, and Sarah Richards.